

COWPER
THE TASK
BOOK IV.

EDITED WITH
INTRODUCTION, NOTES AND PARAPHRASE

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INTRODUCTION.

WILLIAM COWPER, the Author of the "Task," and other poems, and one of the best of English letter-writers, Byron being the only one who can fairly be said to dispute the palm with him, was born on the 15th November, 1731, in the Rectory, great Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire. He came of a good stock, his great grand-father Sir William Cowper being father of two sons, one of whom was the first Earl Cowper, Lord Chancellor, and the other Spencer Cowper, one of the judges of the Court of Common Pleas. The second son of this Spencer Cowper, the judge, was the Reverend John Cowper, D. D., Chaplain to George II., Rector of Great Berkhamstead, and father of the poet. The poet was descended by the mother's side from the celebrated Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, some of whose satires have been paraphrased by Pope. His mother died in 1737, at the age of thirty-four, leaving two sons of whom, William, the elder, was only six years old. Young as he was, the timid, sensitive boy felt his loss keenly, and many years after on being presented by a relative with his mother's portrait, he gave expression to his feeling in a poem which, with the exception perhaps of John Gûpin, is the best known of all his minor compositions. In the portrait of Cowper's mother it is perhaps possible to trace some of that extreme sensibility and nervousness to which he owed so much misery, and the resemblance between mother and son in the two portraits given in the first volume of Southey's life is very noticeable. Very soon after his mother's death, Cowper was sent to a boarding school, which seems to have been most unsuited to the melancholy nervous child, especially at such a very youthful time of life. He speaks of 'various hardships' which he had to suffer in this school, and especially mentions one young bully of fifteen, whose persecution had such an effect on him that, as he says, 'I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than his knees; and that I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress.' Cowper's two years' experience of hardship and bullying in this school led afterwards to his censure of such in the "Thucinium, or A Review of

Schools." In a letter to Mr. Bull, dated November 8, 1784, he says: "The business and purport of it (the 'Tirocinium') are, to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them, especially in the largest," etc. When he was taken away from this school the boy had an affection of the eyes for which he was put for two years under the immediate charge of an oculist. He certainly derived some advantage from this, though he himself says it was 'to no good purpose,' for on leaving the oculist's he was placed at Westminster School. His eyes, however, always remained weak, and in the last years of his life, when he lived near the sea, he complained of being obliged to confine his walks to sheltered lanes, as the keen sea-air of the East Coast of England and the salt spray 'swelled and inflamed' his eyelids. When he went to Westminster he was ten years old, and when he was fourteen, a severe attack of the small-pox, though he nearly died of it, had the effect of entirely "removing the speck" which had appeared on his eyes. At Westminster Cowper appears to have excelled in cricket, football, and Latin verse, and it is probable that whatever his notions of the inadequate moral instruction of that school may have been, the severities and humiliations which he refers to in after-life were reminiscences of the earlier boarding school experience, and not of Westminster.

At Westminster, during Cowper's stay there, there were a number of boys whose names became famous afterwards. Among these were Hastings and Impey, as well as Churchill, the author of the "Rosciad."

When Cowper was eighteen years old he was placed in a solicitor's office. His fellow-clerk was Thurlow, afterwards the celebrated Lord Chancellor. Cowper introduced young Thurlow at his uncle Ashley, Cowper's, where they used to spend much time in conversing with young Cowper's cousins Harriet (afterwards Lady Hesketh) and Theodora, with whom Cowper fell in love.

On leaving the solicitor's office in 1782 Cowper took chambers in the Middle Temple, and at this time he first suffered from the melancholy derangement of mind which affected him more or less through nearly the whole of his after-life. It is unnecessary to describe his mental ailment further than by saying that it was a kind of religious melancholy which culminated in the belief that he was pre-destined to utter damnation, and that for him there never could possibly be any mercy. The same hopeless feeling is said sometimes to have occupied Byron's mind, though his robust nature never allowed it a complete victory, nor probably had he ever an unquestioning belief

in the torments of a future world, such as weighed down Cowper's spirits.

A change of scene being recommended, Cowper went with some friends to Southampton, where he had the opportunity of some yachting, a diversion, however, to which he does not seem to have taken very kindly. His explanation of the probable reasons of his dislike to yachting is a good example of the clearness and lucid arrangement of his thoughts, which make his letters such charming reading. "There is a certain perverseness, of which I believe all men have a share, but of which no man has a larger share than I; I mean that temper, or humour, or whatever it is to be called, that indisposes us to a situation, though not unpleasant in itself, merely because we cannot get out of it, I could not endure the room in which I now write, were I conscious that the door were locked. In less than five minutes I should feel myself a prisoner, though I can spend hours in it, under an assurance that I may leave it when I please, without experiencing any tedium at all. It was for this reason, I suppose, that the yacht was always disagreeable to me, etc."

In 1754 Cowper was called to the bar; he had, however, never studied so as to properly qualify himself for it, his private means being about enough to keep him, besides which his family interest was such that in those days he might feel pretty confident of obtaining a comfortable official post. In 1756 his father died, and three years afterwards, Cowper was made a Commissioner of Bankrupts.

The cousin (Theodora), with whom he had fallen in love, returned his affection, but their engagement was objected to by her father, first on the ground of the smallness of Cowper's means, next because the young pair were so nearly related. It seems, however, that Ashley Cowper, Theodora's father, may have already perceived symptoms of his nephew's incipient derangement and complete unfitness for the struggle with the world. Theodora never married, and it is probable that though much disappointed at the time by her father's refusal, she lived to recognize the wisdom of his decision by which she was saved from the misery which must have attended a union with one who in later years was more or less a maniac.

In the year 1763, Cowper's mental disease assumed a decided character. His means were gradually diminishing, and it is possible that anxiety on this score added to the melancholy unsettlement of his mind. He was now about thirty-two years old, and began to fear that poverty and even actual want might be in store for him. At this time the Clerk of the Journals of the House of Lords died, and two other offices of the same nature, but more profitable, became

vacant through the resignation of their incumbents. Cowper's relative, Major Cowper, had these posts in his gift, and offered Cowper the two most profitable. Cowper accepted at the time but afterwards brooded nervously over his incapacity for public business, and wrote to his benefactor asking that two best appointments might be offered to another person and that he might be given the Clerkship of the Journals, the duties of which post would require a much less strain on his powers, and less business capacity than those of the other two. This arrangement was made but through an unforeseen opposition it was decided by those in authority that Cowper must pass an examination at the bar of the House, to shew his capacity for the duties he had undertaken. With reference to this Cowper says—"A thunderbolt would have been as welcome to me as this intelligence. * * * To require my attendance that I might publicly entitle myself to the office was, in effect, to exclude me from it. In the meantime, the interest of my friend, the honour of his choice, my own reputation and circumstances, all urged me forward; all pressed me to undertake that which I saw to be impracticable. They to whom a public exhibition of themselves is mortal poison may have some idea of the horrors of my situation; others can have none." This shrinking from publicity, and helpless almost imbecile, nervousness are sufficient indication of the state of his mind. The journal books were, he says, thrown open to him, but though he attended at the House for months, in order to get the necessary information from the books he "read without perception," and in short gained nothing by his visits. He went at the close of the summer to the seaside (Margate), for a change, but though he seems for a time to have recovered his spirits now that the immediate cause of depression was absent, yet he looked forward to the winter, when his trial was to take place, with apprehensive horror. In October he returned to town and again attempted to learn something from the books of the House, but as soon as he renewed his labours the helpless derangement of his mind returned. He now consulted a celebrated physician, but with little effect. For some time previously he had been tormented with religious doubts, and an idea that he could not be converted without a miracle. This, of course, was in itself a symptom of mental derangement, and the derangement became accelerated by the disturbance of his mind in relation to the Clerkship of the Journals. He tells us that he hoped for madness to put an end to his troubles, and, as Southey says, this very wish was doubtless an indication that he was at the time actually insane. The next stage was determination towards suicide. He procured a half-ounce phial of laudanum, but met with difficulties

"not knowing where to poison myself, for I was liable to continual interruption in my chambers from my laundress and her husband." Of course a man fully determined on suicide would not have been deterred from swallowing a little laudanum by any number of what Goldwin Smith calls "seasonable interruptions" on the part of the laundress. No doubt he *thought* he was determined, but his prevention by the presence of a porter on the quay where he went to drown himself, the invisible hand which drew down the bottle of poison from his lips, his inability to drive home the knife which he had pressed against his heart, are all to be explained by the instinctive love of life which dominated even the madman's mind. After three attempts to hang himself, the last of which was only unsuccessful by the breaking of the garter with which he had suspended himself, he seems to have had no further intentions of suicide, at that time. He sent for his kinsman, Major Cowper, and told him all. The Major of course, saw at once that there could be no further thought of the clerkship for his relative, and took away with him the document nominating him to the post.

On his recovery from the consequences of his attempt at self-destruction, a violent conviction of his own utter and unpardonable sinfulness seems to have seized on Cowper's mind. At the same time there were other unequivocal symptoms of complete lunacy. He fancied that whenever he went into the street, people stared and laughed at him, and on one occasion he bought a ballad which a man was singing in the street because he fancied it was written about himself. He fancied, too, that he had committed *the* unpardonable sin. His brother, who had been sent for, vainly tried to comfort him, and an evangelical clergyman of the name of Madan, to whom he had applied in his trouble, seems to have been equally unsuccessful. Cowper's despairing madness increased, and his friends resolved to send him to a madhouse. He was accordingly carried to St. Alban's, where a Dr. Cotton kept a private asylum. Before he was taken to this place Cowper had written the following lines in the Sapphic metre, which as they illustrate the profundity of his despairing misery, are given in full:—

"Hatred and vengeance,—my eternal portion—
Scarce can endure delay of execution,
Wait with impatient readiness to seize my
Soul in a moment.

Damn'd below Judas; more abhorr'd than he was,
Who for a few pence sold his holy Master!
Twice betray'd Jesus me, the last delinquent,
Deems the profanest.

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me.
 Hell might afford my miseries a shelter;
 Therefore Hell keeps her ever-hungry mouths all
 Bolted against me.

Hard lot ! encompass'd with a thousand dangers,
 Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors,
 I'm call'd, if vanquished (?), to receive a sentence
 Worse than Abiram's.

Him the vindictive rod of angry Justice
 Sent quick and howling to the centre headlong.
 I fed (?) with judgment, in a fleshly tomb, am
 Buried above ground."

The two words after which a query has been placed are considered by Southey to be "evidently corrupt."

In about five months the extreme form of the patient's malady yielded to Dr. Cotton's treatment. Cowper describes his recovery as a triumph over despair from a sense of unpardonable sin, and the revival of religious faith and hope. Though apparently cured it was considered prudent that he should remain still longer with Dr. Cotton, and as this proposal agreed with his own desires, he remained in the asylum for more than twelve months after his recovery.

At the end of this period his brother looked out for lodgings for him, and as he had to resign his Commissionership of bankruptcy, his friends subscribed among themselves a sufficient annuity to keep him in respectable but economical retirement. His brother procured him a lodging at Huntingdon, of which he says "the river Ouse is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world." Here he made the acquaintance of the Unwin family, which was to be of such great importance to him during the whole remainder of his life. The father was an old clergyman and a scholar, who prepared pupils for the University.

The son was intended for Holy Orders, and there was also a daughter. The member of the family, however, with whom Cowper was most struck at his first acquaintance with the Unwins, and who was to exercise the greatest influence on the life, was Mrs. Unwin, the mother. It was arranged that he should board with this family, and on the 11th November 1765, he took possession of his new home. Soon after he went to live with the Unwins he received a letter from his uncle Ashley Cowper, informing him that the family were displeased with his keeping a servant, beside a boy whom he had brought with him from St Alban's. This servant had been very attentive to him at the Asylum, and followed him when he left it. The 'boy' seems to have been a friendless waif in whom Cowper took an interest. His cousin, Major, by this time Colonel, Cowper,

was, it would seem, justly annoyed with this piece of extravagance on the part of one who lived mainly on the charity of his friends, and threatened to withdraw his personal subscription. At this time Cowper received an anonymous letter assuring him that any deficiency would be made good by a person who loved him tenderly. This person is supposed to have been Lady Hesketh or her sister Theodora. It seems certain that Cowper had a tendency to launch into expenditure beyond his means. At one period of his life, even Lady Hesketh seems to have remonstrated with him, for in a letter to her, dated June 30th, 1793, he says: "You ought not to be surprised that I want money at the half year's end, for where is the man who does not? But, whatever you think, never suspect that my wants are occasioned by lavish and undistinguishing bounty." He had corresponded with Lady Hesketh for sometime after he had joined the Unwin family, but in the beginning of 1767 the correspondence seems to have ceased, probably because Lady Hesketh did not choose to write to him in the strain which he used in his letters to her, which, if not fanatical, were at all events enthusiastically religious.

His life with the Unwins has been described in the "Winter Evening," 150-190, and in a letter to Mrs. Cowper, wife of the Colonel, he gives a description, which closely agrees with that given in the poem. Among other things he says: "cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessories to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists." The religious revival started by Whitfield and Wesley was now in full swing. All classes were affected by it. We read that Whitfield "could look down from the top of a green knoll at Kingswood, on twenty thousand colliers, grimy from the Bristol coalpits, and see, as he preached, 'the tears making white channels down their blackened cheeks.'" Many clergymen who remained within the pale of the Church had a strong leaning towards Methodist views, and the Unwins, if not Methodists, were evangelical and morbidly religious. Such a family was, of course, likely to add Cowper's religious frenzy.

A curious illustration of Cowper's self-examination and of his uncompromising conscientiousness occurs in a letter written to Col. Cowper's wife, to whom Cowper had given the younger Unwin an introduction. There would seem to have been some doubts in Huntingdon as to Cowper's connections and respectability, and in his letter to Mrs. Cowper he makes the following confession: "You

know I am a stranger here ; all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment I believe it is matter of speculation in the place, whence I came and to whom I belong.

"Though my friend (young Unwin) was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond,—yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it, by introducing him to one of my most splendid connections (*i. e.*, Col. and Mrs. Cowper), that when he hears me called '*that fellow Cowper*,' which has happened heretofore, he may be able upon unquestionable evidence to assert my gentlemanhood."

To occupy himself he now took to gardening, his attention being directed, as Southey says, more to the useful than the ornamental departments of horticulture. He writes as follows to Mr. Hill, who managed his business affairs for him, and who was about the only one of his early friends with whom he kept up any correspondence:—"Having commenced gardening, I study the arts of pruning, sowing, and planting ; and enterprise everything in that way, from melons down to cabbages."

In July 1767 the elder Unwin was killed by a fall from his horse. This necessitated the removal of Mrs. Unwin from Huntingdon, and Cowper accompanied her to her new dwelling at Olney (pronounced Oney) in Buckinghamshire. A more utterly dismal and uninteresting place of residence could not easily have been discovered, but the pair were attracted to it by the presence there of the Reverend John Newton, who, after a life of hardship, reckless adventure, and profligacy, had become converted and ordained a clergyman. The already morbid religious passion of Cowper was, of course, still further stirred by the companionship and advice of a religious enthusiast such as Newton, and it may safely be stated that Newton's influence on Cowper was in this way most prejudicial. Years afterwards Lady Hesketh gave her sister Theodora the following account: "He (Cowper) was mentioning that for one or two summers he had found himself under the necessity of taking his walk in the middle of the day, which he thought had hurt him a good deal, 'but,' continued he, 'I could not help it, for it was when Mr. Newton was here, and we made it a rule to pass four days in the week together. We dined at one ; and it was Mr. Newton's rule for tea to be on table at four o'clock, for at six we broke up' 'Well then,' said I, 'if you had your time to yourself after six, you would have good time for an evening's walk, I should have thought.' 'No,' said he ; 'after six we had service or lecture, or something of that kind, which lasted till supper.'

I made no reply, but cannot help thinking they might have made a better use of a fine summer's evening than by shutting themselves up to make long prayers."

The house occupied by Cowper at Olney has nothing interesting about it except the fact that it was so occupied. The present writer with a companion, visited it in 1886, and was shown over the rooms and the garden. The summer house or green-house often referred to in the letters is, or was at that time, still in existence. The door opened between the gardens of the two houses, Newton's and Cowper's, for ready communication with Mr. Newton was after his departure, walled up, but again opened during Lady Austen's reign and afterwards again walled up. Its existence seemed unknown to the old lady who showed us over the garden, but a search behind some shrubs or creepers which covered the wall easily discovered the locality, the marks of its having been built up being very discernible. The summer-house is referred to in the following extract from a letter to Lady Hesketh, dated February 9th, 1786: "My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats, and there you shall sit, etc." As a fact, this greenhouse or summer-house is a wretched place—damp, small, and low. There is one small table on which doubtless much reading and writing have been done. The roof is so low as barely to allow a man of middle height to stand up inside. The interest felt in it is, however, shown by the thousands of names of visitors pencilled all round, and interlacing each other in such numbers that many of them are illegible.

In 1772 Cowper was engaged with Newton in the composition of a set of hymns known as the Olney hymns, and it is probable that this gloomy enjoyment tended to unsettle his mind again, for in January 1773 Dr. Cotton had to be consulted on a return of the old derangement. Cowper was by that time absolutely mad. He again attempted suicide, and having found his way into Mr. Newton's house, he refused to leave it. This attack lasted more than a year. In May 1774 Mrs. Unwin succeeded in persuading him to return to their own house, and we find Cowper, though not absolutely recovered, yet sufficiently so to be aware of his own mental condition. To divert his mind from its gloomy occupation he amused himself with gardening and with the rearing of, some young hares, which latter have been immortalized in his poetry. He did not write to any of his friends for more than two years after his return to his own house,

but in April 1777, we find a letter of thanks to his friend Mr. Hill, thanking him for "a turbot, a lobster, and Captain Brydone; a gentleman who relates his travels so agreeably that he deserves always to travel with an agreeable companion." This book of travels perhaps suggested the lines in "The Winter Evening," 107-119. He also read about this time the Travels of Captain Cook.

In the year 1779 Newton left Olney, but continued by letter to exercise, or try to exercise, an influence over Cowper, which the latter did not always submit to. Newton was consulted about the "Progress of Error," "Truth," "Table Talk," and "Expostulation," which were written at this period of Cowper's life, and followed soon after by "Conversation" and "Retirement."

In a letter to Newton, dated August 16th, 1781, we have the first mention of the celebrated summer parlour already described. "I might date my letter from the greenhouse which we have converted into a summer parlour. The walls hung with garden mats, and the floor covered with a carpet, the sun, too, in a great measure excluded by an awning of mats which forbids him to shine anywhere except upon the carpet, it affords us by far the pleasantest retreat in Olney."

Had he been in this favourite retreat on one memorable day, it is probable we should never have had "Task" and "John Gilpin," for from the summer-house the street cannot be seen. On the particular day referred to he saw from the house two ladies calling at an opposite shop. One was a lady already known to Cowper, the other was her sister Lady Austen, the widow of a baronet. Cowper requested Mrs. Unwin to invite them to tea, and a sudden mutual admiration and friendship arose, the result of which was that Lady Austen settled for a time in the house vacated by Newton, and the doorway between the two gardens, which had been closed after Newton's departure, was re-opened.

"For a while," says Southey, "Lady Austen's conversation had as happy an effect upon the melancholy spirit of Cowper as the harp of David upon Saul. Whenever the cloud seemed to be coming over him, her sprightly powers were exerted to dispel it." It was she who told him the story of John Gilpin, and the dirge for the "Royal George" was composed to suit an air which she used to play on the harpsichord. It was she, too, who urged him to write a long poem in blank verse and when he asked her for a subject, replied: "Oh! you can write on any subject;—write upon this sofa!" Their intimacy was interrupted by a little misunderstanding which however was set right again. Failing health, however, and possibly other reasons, induced her to leave Olney before the "Task" was completed.

Lady Austen's place was to some extent supplied by the Throckmortons, who had a mansion at Weston, about a mile from Cowper's house at Olney, and with whom he became very intimate, playfully calling them Mr. and Mrs. Frog.

John Gilpin had not on its first publication attracted any great amount of notice, but being publicly recited by Henderson, a celebrated actor of the day, it at once became famous, though the author's name was not known until "The Task" and "John Gilpin" were published in the same volume. When this took place, Cowper's cousin, Lady Hesketh, who had been left a widow, judging from the cheerful nature of the shorter poem that Cowper's mental health and cheerfulness had been restored, wrote to him a letter to which he replied in terms of the warmest affection. She then offered him pecuniary help, which he accepted from her as she had been left a comfortable income by her husband.

Cowper's next poem was the "Tirocinium, or A Review of Schools," after which he writes as a great secret to Lady Hesketh that he is engaged on a translation of Homer. This was begun in November 1784. The Translation of the *Iliad* was finished in September 1788, and that of the *Odessey* about a year afterwards; but like other attempts at translating Homer it has been unsuccessful. Pope's Homer is said to amuse boys, and Cowper's to be more suited for men, inasmuch as there are passages which show the taste and felicity of expression which in any work of Cowper's may be taken for granted, but this does not make it a readable book on the whole.

In a letter to Lady Hesketh, December 19th, 1787, Cowper refers to a present sent him anonymously. This consisted of a desk, and a snuff-box of tortoise-shell with a picture of his three hares in the fore-ground of a beautiful landscape, inscribed above "The Peasant's Nest" (See "Sofa," 227), and below—"Tiney, Puss and Bess."

Besides this there was a remittance of £25, with an intimation that it would be sent half-yearly. This anonymous benefactor is generally supposed to have been Theodora.

In June 1786 Lady Hesketh visited him and Mrs. Unwin, and in a letter to Newton he says that his cousin's affectionate behaviour to both of them, the sweetness of her temper, and the sprightliness of her conversation, relieved him in no small degree from his gloomy meditations.

A house at Weston, belonging to the Throckmortons, being at this time vacant, Lady Hesketh on seeing the wretched nature of Cowper's dwelling at Olney determined that he must be removed, and accordingly took the house at Weston. Lady Hesketh had brought

a carriage with her in which Mrs Unwin sometimes took an airing. They visited the Throckmortons and one or two other families, and in some way or other Newton, who was now established in London, heard that they were living a life of greater gaiety than he approved of. He accordingly wrote a letter of strong censure to Mrs. Unwin, to which Cowper replied in such a temperate but at the same time firm tone, as shews that however gentle by nature, he was not a natural fool and would not be bullied.

In the early part of the year 1787 Cowper was again attacked by his old malady, which on this occasion lasted about six months. Mrs. Unwin in the next year received a severe shock from a fall during frosty weather, from which she never completely recovered. Her son had previously died of a fever. Cowper's Uncle, Ashley Cowper, was also dead, and of his old friends Lady Hesketh alone remained to him. She had at this time paid him three visits, and when obliged to be absent from him was always his faithful champion and friend. Cowper also formed new friendships, the most important of which in its results was the one with Hayley the author of 'Triumphs of Temper.' Hayley and Cowper were both engaged on Milton. Hayley was writing a life of Milton, and Cowper had begun an annotated edition of the poems, which, however, never advanced very far. It was stated in the newspapers that they were rivals, and Hayley, anxious to disclaim any attempt to interfere with Cowper's project, wrote to him enclosing a sonnet, and explaining that as they were engaged on different work, one writing a life of Milton, and the other notes to his poems, there need be no opposition between them. This led to correspondence and friendship, and in May 1791 Hayley visited Cowper at Weston. During his stay there Mrs. Unwin had a paralytic stroke, and Hayley was of material service to her by applying an electric machine, from the use of which she improved daily to a certain extent, though she never recovered. In June Hayley left them, not, however, until he had elicited from Cowper a promise to visit him at his seat of Earham, on the coast of Sussex. July was fixed for the visit, and in the meantime Cowper had his portrait painted by Abbot. "In the opinion," says Southey, "of all who saw the portrait at that time, and in Cowper's own, the artist had succeeded to admiration."

The first letter written by Cowper after his arrival at Earham was to a Mr. Samuel Teedon, at Olney, and in connection with this man an extraordinary delusion of Cowper's has to be described. Ever since the attack in 1787 Cowper's nervous system had been morbidly active, and he fancied that he heard every morning a kind

of supernatural communication audibly made him. During Unwin's lifetime Cowper and Mrs Unwin appear to have formed a just estimate of Teedon, who was a poor schoolmaster and a pensioner on their bounty. This man appears to have been 'crazed with self-conceit,' ignorant and impudent, and Cowper writing to Unwin relates an anecdote of him which illustrates the man's impertinence, and shews that Cowper at that time was fully alive to his folly. "Mr. Teedon," he says, "who favours us now and then with his company in an evening, as usual, was not long since discoursing with that eloquence which is so peculiar to himself, on the many providential interpositions that had taken place in his favour. He had wished, for many things (he said), which at the time when he formed those wishes, seemed distant and improbable, some of them indeed impossible. Among other wishes that he had indulged, one was, that he might be connected with men of genius and ability,—— 'and in my connection with this worthy gentleman (said he, turning to me), that wish, I am sure, is amply gratified.' You may suppose that I felt the sweat gush out upon my forehead when I heard that speech; and if you do, you will not be at all mistaken, so much was I delighted with the delicacy of that incense." In this man Cowper gradually placed entire confidence, and especially believed that Teedon, as he himself professed, was empowered to interpret Cowper's dreams and the audible communications mentioned above. The fact that Mrs. Unwin shared Cowper's superstitious belief on this head shews that her own mind had been much shaken by her stroke, and of Teedon himself, Southey says, "As for the schoolmaster, when he perceived in what light he was considered by two persons whom he had been accustomed to look up to as greatly his superiors, neither his vanity nor his modesty would allow him to question their discernment. No suspicion of knavery attaches to him, for he was a simple-hearted creature: as they would have him to be a sort of high priest *incog.* such he fancied himself to be, and consulted his internal Urim and Thummi with happy and untroubled confidence."

At Earham Cowper's portrait was painted by Romney, a painter who was held by some to be equal to the Great Sir Joshua Reynolds himself. The portrait of the poet in the frontispiece of the first volume of Southey's Cowper is taken from this great picture. Hayley says of it: "He (Romney) wished to express what he often saw in studying the features of Cowper, —

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling;

and I think he expressed it without over stepping the modesty of truth and nature." Of this, Southey remarks, "It seems strange that

Hayley and Romney could mistake for the light of genius what Mr. Leigh Hunt has truly and forcibly described as 'a fire fiercer than that either of intellect or fancy gleaming from the raised and protruded eye!' The fire alluded to is, of course, that of insanity.

After Cowper's return from Eartham to Weston his malady gained ground, and the history of the remainder of his stay there is a humiliating account of his madness and of his entire dependence on Teedon for the interpretation of his mysterious warnings, and it seems difficult not to doubt the correctness of Southey's opinion that "no suspicion of knavery attaches to Teedon, for he was a simple-hearted creature," when we read in a letter from Cowper to the schoolmaster that his (Teedon's) *quarterly remittance is ready* whenever it may suit him to call for it. Lady Hesketh seems to have had her suspicions of this man, for in a letter to her, written in June 1793, Cowper says. "I know who is alluded to in your letter, under the description of a person who lives luxuriously at my cost." He adds, however, "Mrs. Unwin and I are merely the medium through which the bounty passes, not the authors of it." This may be a delusion, for it is scarcely conceivable that any one would choose two people, one of whom was a confirmed lunatic and the other an imbecile paralytic, as the managers of his charity.

One of his delusions at this time was that it was necessary for him to undergo severe penance for his sins. He sat for six days still and silent, taking no food except a little bread dipped in water and occasionally in wine. To rouse him it was suggested that Mrs. Unwin should express a wish to go for a walk, and, on her doing so, Cowper instantly arose and offered her his arm. "This" as Southey remarks, "appears to have been the last instance in which her influence over him was exerted for good," for with her failing bodily and mental health she became querulous and exacting in a degree which appears considerably to have tried the patience even of the amiable Lady Hesketh.

Towards the close of 1793 Hayley paid another visit to Weston, and was so struck with Cowper's pitiable condition that he resolved to use every endeavour to interest the more powerful of the poet's friends in his behalf. With this intention he left in November and soon afterwards Lady Hesketh arrived. In April 1794, Hayley returned, but neither his presence nor that of any one else could dispel the fixed melancholy which had settled on Cowper. At this time he received an invitation to spend some time with an old friend in Ireland, and in declining the invitation for him Lady Hesketh throws some light on the condition of Mrs. Unwin at this time, and

on the evil effect of her companionship on Cowper. She says: "I found this dear soul (Cowper) on my arrival the *absolute nurse* of this poor lady Mrs. Unwin, who cannot move out of her chair without help, nor walk across the room unless supported by two people; added to this, her voice is almost wholly unintelligible, and as their house was repairing all the summer, he was reduced for many months to have no conversation *but hers*. * * * * he was deprived by this poor lady of all his wonted exercises both mental and bodily as she did not choose he should leave her for a moment, or ever use a pen or a book except when he read to *her* * * *."

Again, "I find a terrible hindrance in the person of this poor old lady above-mentioned, who really seems to live only to counteract whatever schemes are planned for his benefit." At this time a pension of £300 was conferred on him not before some such aid was urgently wanted, for Mrs. Unwin, while insisting on being the nominal head of the establishment seems to have left the real disposal of their funds to a great extent at the control of a certain Hannah, apparently a kind of trusted and indulged upper servant. To remedy this state of things as well as because it was hoped that Cowper's health would benefit by the change, it was determined to remove the pair from Weston, and by the tact and patience of Cowper's relative, Mr. Johnson, they were conveyed to the village of North Tuddenham in Norfolk. In August of the same year 1795, they were taken to the village of Mundsley, on the coast. In October they removed to Dunham Lodge, near Swaffham, and in the next year to East Dereham, a town in the middle of Norfolk. After arriving at East Dereham Mrs. Unwin died on the 17th December 1796. On the morning of the day on which she died Cowper said to the servant: "Sally, is there life above stairs?"

A few hours after he was told that Mrs. Unwin was dead, he said he was sure she was not actually so, but would come to life again in the grave, and then undergo the horrors of suffocation on his account, for he was the occasion of all that she or any other creature upon earth ever did or could suffer. This incident is enough to shew the horrible condition of mind into which he had fallen. When taken to see the corpse he uttered one passionate exclamation and never mentioned her name or spoke of her again. From this time to his death there is little to record. His melancholy condition was such that when Sir John Throckmorton (of Weston) and a young friend of the name of Rose, to whom he had been greatly attached, came to see him, he scarcely noticed them. He died on the 25th April 1800, his last words, on being offered a cordial by a lady who attended

him, being, "What can it signify?" He was buried in East Dereham Church, and a monument was erected to his memory by Lady Hesketh, for which Hayley wrote an inscription as well as for the tablet in the same Church to the memory of Mrs. Unwin.

The reviewer (in the *Monthly Review*) of Cowper's first volume of poems, "Truth, Table Talk, Retirement," etc., says:—"Mr. Cowper's predominant turn of mind, though serious and devotional, is at the same time drily humorous and sarcastic. Hence his very religion has a smile that is arch, and his sallies of humour an air that is religious; and yet, motley as is the mixture, it is so contrived as to be neither ridiculous nor disgusting. His versification is almost as singular as the materials upon which it is employed. Anxious only to give each image its due prominence and relief, he has wasted no unnecessary attention on grace or embellishment; his language, therefore, though neither striking by humorous nor elegant, is plain, forcible, and expressive." If this humour and sarcasm are observable in the poems referred to, they are still more so in, "The Task." The allusion to the 'inquisitive attention' of 'the fair' who, 'though eloquent themselves' (i. e., fond of chattering) fear to interrupt the reading ("Winter Evening," ll. 52-54); the 'sweet bashfulness' of the 'modest speaker' who is 'ashamed and grieved to engross a moment's notice and yet begs, begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,' and then the bitter gibe on this bashfulness which 'claims, at least, this praise,

The dearth of information and good sense,
That it foretells us, always comes to pass,

all these are examples of his slyly or sometimes playfully satirical power.

To take a longer passage—we may read the description of the fashionable clergyman in "The Timepiece," l. 409.

'The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
And then skip down again; pronounce a text,
Cry Hem! and reading what they never wrote,
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene.

* * * * *

Some, decent in demeanour while they preach,
That task performed, relapse into themselves,
And having spoken wisely, at the close

Grow wanton, and give proof to ev'ry eye—

Whoe'er was edified themselves were not

Forth comes the pocket mirror. First we (i. e., the clergyman) stroke

An eyebrow; next compose a straggling lock;

Then with an air, most gracefully perform'd,
 Fall back into our seats; extend an arm,
 And lay it at its ease with gentle care,
 With handkerchief in hand, depending low:
 The better hand, more busy, gives the nose
 Its bergamot, or aids th' indebted eye
 With op'ra glass to watch the moving scene,
 And recognise the slow-retiring fair.'

We might almost fancy we were reading the description of the Reverend Charles Honeyman in Thackeray's "Newcomes."

Take again the description of the poultry-stealer and his prey —
 "Winter Evening," l. 445

"* * * * Nor will he leave
 Unwrench'd the door, however well secured,
 Where chanticler amidst his harem sleeps
 In unsuspecting pomp; twitch'd from his perch,
 He gives the princely bird with all his wives
 To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,
 And loudly wond'ring at the sudden change."

The sense of the comic side of this proceeding is evidently modified in Cowper's mind by sympathy with the unfortunate cock.

The same mixture of feelings is observable in the following extract from "The Winter Morning Walk," l. 58.

"Now from the roost, or from the neighbouring pale,
 Where, diligent to catch the first faint gleam
 Of smiling day, they gossip'd side by side,
 Come trooping at the housewife's well-known call
 The feather'd tribes domestic; *half on wing,*
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,
 Conscious, and fearful of too deep a plunge.
 The sparrow peep, and quit the shelt'ring eaves
 To seize the fair occasion; well they eye
 The scatter'd grain, and, thievishly resolved
 To escape th' impending famine, often scared
 As oft return, a pert, voracious kind.
 Clean riddance quickly made, one only care
 Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,
 Or shed impervious to the blast. Resigned
 To sad necessity, the cock foregoes
 His wonted strut, and, wading at their head
 With well-consider'd steps seems to resent
 His alter'd gait, and stateliness retrench'd."

The five lines referring to the sparrows in the above must be considered parenthetical, for at l. 70, "clean riddance," etc., the description returns to domestic poultry.

Cowper's love for, and close observation of, animals and their ways is seen all through the poem. A few lines earlier than the

above-given passage (l. 47) we have the description of the Woodman's dog in the snow :—

“ * * * * Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow, and now with many a frisk,
Wide scamp'ring, snatches up the drifted snow
With iv'ry teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy.”

The waggoner's horses (“Winter Evening,” l. 347) are another example.

The “Winter Morning Walk,” l. 27, supplies us with a picture, the melancholy side only of which seems to have struck the poet's imagination.—

“The cattle mourn in corners, where the fence
Screens them, and seem, half petrified, to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness.”

Cowper's description of natural scenery is also due to close observation of minute details. He does not, like Byron, delight in picturing the wilder and sterner aspects of nature, cataracts and thunderstorms, nor even the softer beauties of lake and woodland. Sir James Mackintosh (quoted by Southey) says: “Cowper does not describe the most beautiful scenes in nature, he discovers what is most beautiful in ordinary scenes. In fact, Cowper saw very few beautiful scenes; but his poetical eye, and his moral heart, detected beauty in the sandy flats of Buckinghamshire.”

The following passage describes the scenery, if such it can be called in the neighbourhood of Olney :—

How oft upon you eminence, our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene!
Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
The distant plough slow-moving, and beside
His lab'ring team, that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in his bank
Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond and overthwart the stream
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds.

* * * * *
Scenes must be beautiful which daily view'd
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years;
Praise justly due to those that I describe.

The *beauty* described here is rather in the mind of the writer than in the somewhat commonplace scene he describes. He 'receives but what he gives,' and he seems in a measure to have a secret consciousness of this, for the last four lines are defensive rather than enthusiastically laudatory.

Cowper's kindness of heart, seems to lead him occasionally into a too lenient representation of those whom he has to censure, provided they are characters of whom he has had personal knowledge. He censures a class, but he forgives the individual. His affection, too, for any particular class is apt to lead him into an indulgent estimate of their characteristics.

As an example of this we may take the description of the militia-man or rather of the rustic, before he is drawn for the militia. "The clown, the child of nature," etc. ("Winter Evening," l. 623), is an imaginary being, the creation of the poet's gentle mind. In the words of Mr. Storr, he is "a creature of the poet's brain, to be found in Arcadia, not in England." It is to be feared, too, that the "meek and patient pair" described in l. 400-420 are, at least, exceptional specimens of the class they belong to. Mr. Goldwin Smith's remarks on Cowper's tendency to be misled by his partialities deserve to be quoted at length:—

"No man was ever less qualified for the office of a censor; his judgment is at once disarmed, and a breach in his principles is at once made by the slightest personal influence. Bishops are bad; they are like the Cretans, evil hearts and slow bellies; but the Bishop whose brother Cowper knows is a blessing to the Church. Deans and Canons are lazy sinecurists but there is a bright exception in the case of the Cowper who held a golden stall at Durham. Gunning India is criminal, but Warren Hastings is acquitted, because he was with Cowper at Westminster. Discipline was deplorably relaxed in all Colleges except that of which Cowper's brother was a fellow "

Another remarkable instance might be added to which there is no reference in the poems, but which seems to illustrate very strikingly Cowper's proneness to be influenced by his prejudices. Hayley, who as already related, was an intimate friend of Cowper during his latter years, was unfortunate in his marriage. His wife had inherited from her mother an extreme irritability and nervousness which approached mental derangement. Hayley was, he says, "involved in scenes of anguish and affliction, with which no human powers appeared strong enough incessantly to contend." The lady was, however, of a most compliant disposition in one respect. She evinced no

signs of jealousy when Hayley granted himself what Southey euphemistically calls "a patriarch's license." She had no child of her own and adopted from his birth an illegitimate son of her husband's whom he named Thomas Alphonso Hayley. This boy is spoken of *passim* in the letters under the name of Tom, and Cowper in a letter, dated September 8th, 1793, writes of him—"If Tom is charmed with the thoughts of coming to Weston, we are equally so with the thoughts of seeing him here." He visited Weston in 1794, when Cowper's malady was at its worst, and Cowper, we are told, did not shrink from him as he did from everybody else. Here then we have Cowper, the most strictly moral of men, both in his private and in his poetical character, countenancing apparently, or at any rate tolerating, the illicit connections of his friend Hayley, and inviting the result of one of those connections to his own home. This is not all. On Hayley's last visit to Weston he wrote to his *wife* (!!!) that he was forced to bring Jenny as his attendant, having been recently obliged to send poor Mary to London, "because she had fallen into a state of mind little superior to that of the dear Cowper's."

On this Southey remarks: "If Hayley had paid any regard to appearances he would not have taken either Mary or Jenny for his attendant." Mary and Jenny, then, appear to have represented two of the "patriarchal" appendages with which Hayley solaced himself even at this date. His mode of life must have been known to Cowper, and the conclusion seems to follow that though immorality in the abstract is reprehensible, still, there is no harm in dear Mr. Hayley's retaining one or two "patriarchal" comforts.

Cowper's poetry is distinctly opposed in character to what has been called with some severity the pinchbeck versification of Pope *i. e.*, poetry depending for its excellence on "correctness" and art with a certain amount of meretricious ornament. "God made the country and man made the town," says Cowper, whereas to judge from his poetry, Pope gives the town the first place. Even his "Rape of the Lock," the most finished of all his poems, deals only with the follies, fashions, and affectations of the Town. Cowper, on the other hand, not only describes nature, but he does it in natural language. It is true that there are to be found classicisms, *i. e.*, Latin idioms, and long words derived from Latin, where a shorter might have served the turn, but to a public school-boy like Cowper it may almost be said that such expressions were the natural ones. It need scarcely be added that Milton is another instance, and in a far greater degree, of the same habit, and Cowper's early fondness for and reading of "Paradise Lost" (*see* "Winter Evening," 709-17), may have aided

in forming his style. Mr. Storr quotes: "The stable yields a *ster-coraceous* heap," ("The Garden," l. 463), and the "*introverted* toes" of the recruit ("Winter Evening," l. 633), the "leaning pile *deciduous*" in the "Winter Morning Walk," l. 40, and the "Large *prelibation*" of l. 574 might be added. Mr. Storr says that a friend had suggested to him: "Did not Cowper's grandiloquent words arise, in part at least, from this playfulness and sense of humour? He often seems to me to be laughing at himself like Lamb, as he coins them." That this is the case would seem to be inferable from other passages where there is no introduction of sesquipedalian words, but where it is quite obvious that the poet is unmistakably laughing at himself. Take for instance the passage about the shadow, in the "Winter Morning Walk," l. 11.

'Mine (shadow) spindling into longitude immense,
In spite of gravity, and sage remark
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
Provokes me to a smile——'

Here we have the poet in effect addressing himself: "Oh, yes, 'tis all very well for you to make these moral reflections, but you know you can't help laughing at the ridiculous shadow of yourself." The cases are not perhaps quite identical, but the same playful humour which is exhibited in these lines may well have been the origin of the use of the long Latin words referred to, with the corresponding consciousness of their unsuitability.

"The Task" was more popular during the first fifty years after it was written than it is in our own day. Southey says: "Its religious character, no doubt, contributed largely to its circulation, by carrying it among a numerous and growing class of readers, for whom that character constituted its chief attraction." Thomson had revived the taste for descriptive poetry, but Thomson with his adherence to the old idyllic names, his Damons and his Musidoras, and his artificial diction was inferior to Cowper, who described in simple language what he actually saw. The poem appeared therefore, to use Southey's words, 'just at the fulness of time, when the way had been prepared for it.' A curious example of the popularity of Cowper's "Task" in the beginning of the century occurs in Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility," where Miss Marianne Dashwood, though a young lady of the most romantic proclivities, goes into raptures over Cowper's poetry.

Mr. Goldwin Smith, speaking of a little-read poem of Cowper's called "Antithelyphthora," says: "Alone among Cowper's works it has a taint of coarseness." Our assent to this proposition must, it

seems, depend on what we understand by coarseness. If by *coarseness* we understand expressions calculated to raise indelicate or impure thoughts, Cowper may be pronounced free of such,—certainly of the latter. But if by coarseness we mean language or ideas suggestive to the mind of repulsive or offensive images, then Cowper can scarcely be acquitted of such. It must, however, always be borne in mind that what may be coarseness in our own day was not necessarily so in Cowper's time. Cowper himself, in a letter to Newton, says: "It happens sometimes that a coarse expression is almost necessary to do justice to the indignation excited by an abominable subject." This, however, is not the kind of coarseness referred to. What is meant may be illustrated by quotation. "The pent-up breath of an unsav'ry throng" ("Winter Evening," l. 196):—

" * * * * a public pest.

That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds
His hungry acres, stinks and is of use."

The rooks and daws who

'Lean pensioners upon the traveller's track,
Pick up their nauseous dole, though sweet to them,
Of voided pulse, or half digested grain,'

are all examples of a coarseness of detail which would scarcely find favour with a modern writer. Of impurity there is absolutely none. Of nastiness there is a little, but the passages quoted are perhaps the worst.

THE TASK.

BOOK IV.—THE WINTER EVENING.

THE ARGUMENT.

The post comes in—The newspaper is read—The world contemplated at a distance—Address to winter—The rural amusements of a winter evening compared with the fashionable ones—Address to evening—A brown study—Fall of snow in the evening—The waggoner—A poor family piece—The rural thief—Public houses—The multitude of them censured—The farmer's daughter: what she was; what she is—The simplicity of country manners almost lost—Causes of the change—Desertion of the country by the rich—Neglect of magistrates—The militia principally in fault—The new recruit and his transformation—Reflection on bodies corporate—The love of rural objects natural to all, and never to be totally extinguished.

THE TASK.

BOOK IV.—THE WINTER EVENING.

Hark ! 'tis the twanging horn ! O'er yonder bridge,
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn, 10
And having dropped the expected bag — pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful : messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some,
To him indifferent whether grief or joy.
Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains, 20
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
But oh the important budget ! ushered in
With such heart-shaking music, who can say
What are its tidings ? have our troops awaked ?
Or do they still, as if with opium drugged,
Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave ?

Is India free? and does she wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace,
Or do we grind her still? The grand debate, 30
The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh — I long to know them all ;
I burn to set the imprisoned wranglers free,
And give them voice and utterance once again.
Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each, 40
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
Not such his evening, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and, squeezed
And bored with elbow-points through both his sides,
Outcolds the ranting actor on the stage ;
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen all tranquillity and smiles.
This folio of four pages, happy work ! 50
Which not even critics criticise ; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break ;
What is it but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns ?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts ambition. On the summit, see,
The seals of office glitter in his eye ;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them. At his heels, 60
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dexterous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.

Here rills of oily eloquence in soft
Meanders lubricate the course they take ;
The modest speaker is ashamed and grieved
To engross a moment's notice, and yet begs,
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.
Sweet bashfulness ! it claims at least this praise ; 70
The dearth of information and good sense
That it foretells us, always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here,
There forests of no meaning spread the page
In which all comprehension wanders lost ;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion ; roses for the cheeks
And lilies for the brows of faded age, 80
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heaven, earth, and ocean plundered of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons and city feasts, and favourite airs,
Æthereal journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katerfelto, with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.
'Tis pleasant through the loopholes of retreat
To peep at such a world ; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd ; 90
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear.
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced
To some secure and more than mortal height,
That liberates and exempts me from them all.

It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations ; I behold
The tumult, and am still. The sound of war 100
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me ;
Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And avarice that make man a wolf to man,
Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats,
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flower to flower, so he from land to land ;
The manners, customs, policy of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans ; 110
He sucks intelligence in every clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return, a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes ;
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.
O Winter ! ruler of the inverted year, 120
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way ;
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art ! Thou hold'st the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning east, 130
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,

Down to the rosy west ; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering, at short notice, in one group
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,
Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee King of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness, 140
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates ,
No powdered pert proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings ; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake :
But here the needle plies its busy task, 150
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom ; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair ;
A wreath that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay.
The poet's or historian's page, by one
Made vocal for the amusement of the rest ;
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds 160
The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out ;
And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,
And in the charming strife triumphant still ;
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
On female industry : the threaded steel
Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds.

The volume closed, the customary rites
 Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal,
 Such as the mistress of the world once found
 Delicious, when her patriots of high note, 170
 Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
 And under an old oak's domestic shade,
 Enjoy'd, spare feast ! a radish and an egg.
 Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
 Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
 Or fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth ;
 Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
 Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
 That made them an intruder on their joys,
 Start at His awful name, or deem His praise 180
 A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
 Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
 While we retrace with memory's pointing wand,
 That calls the past to our exact review,
 The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
 The disappointed foe, deliverance found
 Unlooked for, life preserved and peace restored,
 Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.
 "O evenings worthy of the gods !" exclaimed
 The Sabine bard. O evenings, I reply, 190
 More to be prized and coveted than yours,
 As more illumined, and with noble truths,
 That I and mine, and those we love, enjoy.
 Is Winter hideous in a garb like this ?
 Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,
 The pent-up breath of an unsavoury throng,
 To thaw him into feeling, or the smart
 And snappish dialogue that flippant wits
 Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile ?
 The self-complacent actor, when he views 200
 (Stealing a sidelong glance at a full house)
 The slope of faces from the floor to the roof

(As if one master spring controlled them all)
Relaxed into a universal grin,
Sees not a countenance there that speaks of joy
Half so refined or so sincere as ours.
Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks
That idleness has ever yet contrived
To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,
To palliate dulness, and give time a shove. 210
Time as he passes us, has a dove's wing,
Unsoiled, and swift, and of a silken sound ;
But the World's Time is Time in masquerade.
Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledged
With motley plumes ; and where the peacock shows
His azure eyes, is tintured black and red
With spots quadrangular of diamond form,
Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades, the emblems of untimely graves.
What should be, and what was an hour-glass once, 220
Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard mast
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.
Thus decked, he charms a world whom fashion blinds
To his true worth, most pleased when idle most,
Whose only happy are their wasted hours.
Even misses, at whose age their mothers wore
The backstring and the bib, assume the dress
Of womanhood, sit pupils in the school
Of card-devoted Time, and night by night
Placed at some vacant corner of the board, 230
Learn every trick, and soon play all the game.
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed ?
As he that travels far, oft turns aside
To view some rugged rock or mouldering tower,
Which seen, delights him not ; then coming home,
Describes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth ;

So I, with brush in hand and pallet spread
 With colours mixed for a far different use, 240
 Paint cards and dolls, and every idle thing
 That fancy finds in her excursive flights.

Come, Evening, once again, season of peace ;
 Return, sweet Evening, and continue long !
 Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
 With matron step slow moving, while the Night
 Treads on thy sweeping train , one hand employed
 In letting fall the curtain of repose
 On bird and beast, the other charged for man
 With sweet oblivion of the cares of day ; 250
 Not sumptuously adorned, not needing aid,
 Like homely-featured Night, of clustering gems ;
 A star or two just twinkling on thy brow
 Suffices thee ; save that the moon is thine
 No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
 With ostentatious pageantry, but set
 With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
 Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.
 Come then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,
 Or make me so. Composure is thy gift : 260
 And whether I devote thy gentler hours
 To books, to music, or the poet's toil ;
 To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit ;
 Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,
 When they command whom man was born to please ;
 I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.

Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
 With lights, by clear reflection multiplied
 From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,
 Goliath, might have seen his giant bulk 270
 Whole without stooping, towering crest and all,
 My pleasures too begin. But me perhaps
 The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile

With faint illumination, that uplifts
The shadow to the ceiling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quivering flame,
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So spent in parlour twilight ; such a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with some new theme 280
Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
That never feel a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one ; I am conscious, and confess,
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,
Trees, churches, and strange visages expressed
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gazed, myself creating what I saw. 290
Nor less amused have I quiescent watched
The sooty films that play upon the bars
Pendulous, and foreboding, in the view
Of superstition, prophesying still,
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach
'Tis thus the understanding takes repose
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And sleeps and is refreshed. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man 300
Were tasked to his full strength, absorbed and lost.
Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected powers, and snapping short
The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves
Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.

How calm is my recess ; and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind endear
The silence and the warmth enjoyed within ! 310
I saw the woods and fields at close of day
A variegated show ; the meadows green,
Though faded ; and the lands, where lately waved
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,
Upturned so lately by the forceful share :
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed
By flocks, fast feeding, and selecting each
His favourite herb ; while all the leafless groves
That skirt the horizon, wore a sable hue, 320
Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change !
Which even now, though silently performed
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes.
Fast falls a fleecy shower : the downy flakes
Descending, and, with never-ceasing lapse,
Softly alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thickening mantle : and the green 330
And tender blade that feared the chilling blast
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.
In such a world, so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted, or, if found
Without some thistly sorrow at its side,
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguished than ourselves ; that thus
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,
And sympathise with others suffering more. 340
Ill fares the traveller now, and he that stalks
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team.

The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregated loads adhering close
To the clogged wheels ; and in its sluggish pace
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostrils wide,
While every breath, by respiration strong
Forced downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He, formed to bear 350
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes, and puckered cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on.
One hand secures his hat, save when with both
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.
O happy ! and in my account, denied
That sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou.
Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed 360
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpaired.
The learnèd finger never need explore
Thy vigorous pulse ; and the unhealthful east,
That breathes the spleen, and searches every bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.
Thy days roll on exempt from household care ;
Thy waggon is thy wife ; and the poor beasts,
That drag the dull companion to and fro,
Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care
Ah, treat them kindly ! rude as thou appearest, 370
Yet show them thou hast mercy ! which the great,
With needless hurry whirled from place to place,
Humane as they would seem, not always show.
Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warmed, while it lasts, by labour, all day long

They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad and fed but sparsely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights 380
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well ;
And while her infant race, with outspread hands,
And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warmed.
The man feels least, as more inured than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly moved by his severer toil ;
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs. 390
The taper soon extinguished, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declined, and the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten without sauce
Of savoury cheese, or butter costher still,
Sleep seems their only refuge : for, alas !
Where penury is felt the thought is chained,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few.
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care,
Ingenious parsimony takes, but just 400
Saves the small inventory, bed and stool,
Skillet and old carved chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands, but other boast have none
To soothe their honest pride, that scorns to beg ;
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy ; choosing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earned,
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure 410
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work

Of distribution ; liberal of their aid
To clamorous importunity in rags,
But oftentimes deaf to suppliants who would blush
To wear a tattered garb however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth ;
These ask with painful shyness, and refused
Because deserving, silently retire.

But be ye of good courage. Time itself 420
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give increase,
And all your numerous progeny, well trained,
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,
And labour too. Meanwhile ye shall not want
What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.
I mean the man who, when the distant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty, with most who whimper forth
Their long complaints, is self-inflicted woe ; 430
The effect of laziness or sottish waste.

Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder ; much solicitous how best
He may compensate for a day of sloth,
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.
Woe to the gardener's pale, the farmer's hedge
Plashed neatly, and secured with driven stakes
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength,
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil, 440
An ass's burden, and when laden most
And heaviest, light of foot steals fast away.
Nor does the boarded hovel better guard
The well-stacked pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrenched the door, however well secured,
Where chanticleer amidst his harem sleeps

In unsuspecting pomp. Twitched from the perch,
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,
To his voracious bag, struggling in vain, 450
And loudly wondering at the sudden change.
Nor this to feed his own. 'Twere some excuse
Did pity of their sufferings warp aside
His principle, and tempt him into sin
For their support, so destitute. But they
Neglected pine at home, themselves, as more
Exposed than others, with less scruple made
His victims, robbed of their defenceless all.
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety that prompts 460
His every action, and imbrutes the man.
Oh for a law to noose the villain's neck
Who starves his own : who persecutes the blood
He gave them in his children's veins, and hates
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love !
Pass where we may, through city or through town,
Village or hamlet, of this merry land,
Though lean and beggared every twentieth pace
Conducts the unguarded nose to such a whiff
Of stale debauch ; forth issuing from the styes 470
That law has licensed, as makes temperance reel.
There sit, involved and lost in curling clouds
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lackey, and the groom ; the craftsman there
Takes a Lethean leave of all his toil ;
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the shears,
And he that kneads the dough ; all loud alike,
All learnèd, and all drunk. The fiddle screams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wailed
Its wasted tones and harmony unheard ; 480
Fierce the dispute, whate'er the theme ; while she,
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,

Perched on the sign-post, holds with even hand
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays
A weight of ignorance ; in that, of pride ;
And smiles delighted with the eternal poise.
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound
The cheek-distending oath, not to be praised
As ornamental, musical, polite,
Like those which modern senators employ, 490
Whose oath is rhetoric, and who swear for fame.
Behold the schools in which plebeian minds,
Once simple, are initiated in arts
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill ! 'Tis here they learn
The road that leads from competence and peace
To indigence and rapine ; till at last
Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her encumbered lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little : vain the attempt 500
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That like the filth with which the peasant feeds
His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
The Excise is fattened with the rich result
Of all this riot ; and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touched by the Midas finger of the State,
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.
Drink and be mad then : 'tis your country bids !
Gloriously drunk, obey the important call ! 510
Her cause demands the assistance of your throats ;
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.

Would I had fallen upon those happier days
That poets celebrate ; those golden times
And those Arcadian scenes that Maro sings,
And Sidney, warbler of poetic prose.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts

That felt their virtues : Innocence, it seems,
From courts dismissed, found shelter in the groves.
The footsteps of simplicity, impressed 520
Upon the yielding herbage (so they sing),
Then were not all effaced : then speech profane,
And manners profligate, were rarely found,
Observed as prodigies, and soon reclaimed
Vain wish ! those days were never : airy dreams
Sat for the picture ; and the poet's hand,
Imparting substance to an empty shade,
Imposed a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it : I still must envy them an age
That favoured such a dream, in days like these 530
Impossible, when Virtue is so scarce,
That to suppose a scene where she presides
Is tramontane, and stumbles all belief.
No : we are polished now. The rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost.
Her head, adorned with lappets pinned aloft, 540
And ribands streaming gay, superbly raised,
And magnified beyond all human size,
Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand
For more than half the tresses it sustains ;
Her elbows ruffled, and her tottering form
Ill propped upon French heels ; she might be deemed
(But that the basket dangling on her arm
Interprets her more truly) of a rank
Too proud for dairy work or sale of eggs.
Expect her soon with foot boy at her heels, 550
No longer blushing for her awkward load,
Her train and her umbrella all her care.

The town has tinged the country ; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
Down into scenes still rural ; but, alas !
Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now.
Time was when in the pastoral retreat
The unguarded door was safe ; men did not watch
To invade another's right, or guard their own. 560
Then sleep was undisturbed by fear, unscared
By drunken howlings ; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unsuspecting nights,
And slumbers unalarmed. Now, ere you sleep,
See that your polished arms be primed with care,
And drop the nightbolt ; ruffians are abroad ;
And the first larum of the cock's shrill throat
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear 570
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.
Even daylight has its dangers ; and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once
Of other tenants than melodious birds
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change ! to which full many a cause
Inveterate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.
The course of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.
Increase of power begets increase of wealth ; 580
Wealth luxury, and luxury excess ;
Excess, the scrofulous and itchy plague
That seizes first the opulent, descends
To the next rank contagious, and in time
Taints downward all the graduated scale
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
The rich, and they that have an arm to check

The license of the lowest in degree,
Desert their office; and themselves intent
On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus 590
To all the violence of lawless hands
Resign the scenes their presence might protect.
Authority herself not seldom sleeps,
Though resident, and witness of the wrong.
The plump convivial person often bears
The magisterial sword in vain, and lays
His reverence and his worship both to rest
On the same cushion of habitual sloth.
Perhaps timidity restrains his arm ;
When he should strike, he trembles, and sets free, 600
Himself enslaved by terror of the band,
The audacious convict, whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though, by profession, ghostly pure,
He too may have his vice, and sometimes prove
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside
In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milk-white hand ; the palm is hardly clean
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.
Foh ! 'twas a bribe that left it : he hast touched
Corruption. Whoso seeks an audit here 610
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,
Wild fowl or venison, and his errand speeds.
But faster far, and more than all the rest,
A noble cause, which none who bears a spark
Of public virtue ever wished removed,
Works the deplored and mischievous effect.
'Tis universal soldiership has stabbed
The heart of merit in the meaner class.
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause, 620
Seem most at variance with all moral good,
And incompatible with serious thought.

The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
But his own simple pleasures, now and then
A wrestling-match, a food-race, or a fair,
Is balloted, and trembles at the news :
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears
A Bible-oath to be whate'er they please,
To do he knows not what. The task performed, 630
That instant he becomes the serjeant's care,
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,
Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,
Unapt to learn, and formed of stubborn stuff,
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,
Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well ;
He stands erect ; his slouch becomes a walk ;
He steps right onward, martial in his air, 640
His form, and movement ; is as smart above
As meal and larded locks can make him ; wears
His hat, or his plumed helmet, with a grace ;
And, his three years of heroship expired,
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.
He hates the field, in which no fife or drum
Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,
And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.
'Twere well if his exterior change were all ;
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost 650
His ignorance and harmless manners too.
To swear, to game, to drink, to show at home
By lewdness, idleness, and Sabbath breach,
The great proficiency he made abroad,
To astonish and to grieve his gazing friends,
To break some maiden's and his mother's heart,

To be a pest where he was useful once,
Are his sole aim, and all his glory now.

Man in society is like a flower
Blown in its native bed, 'tis there alone 660
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
Shine out ; there only reach their proper use.
But man associated and leagued with man
By regal warrant, or self-joined by bond
For interest sake, or swarming into clans
Beneath one head for purposes of war,
Like flowers selected from the rest, and bound
And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,
Fades rapidly, and by compression marred,
Contracts defilement not to be endured. 670
Hence chartered boroughs are such public plagues ;
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combined,
Become a loathsome body, only fit
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life,
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature, and disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man, 680
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dyeing the white robe
Of innocent commercial justice, red.
Hence too the field of glory, as the world
Misdeems it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all its majesty of thundering pomp,
Enchanting music, and immortal wreaths,
Is but a school where thoughtlessness is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for every vice. 690

But slighted as it is, and by the great
Abandoned, and, which still I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me still.
I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,
That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But there I laid the scene. There early strayed
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural, rural too 700
The firstborn efforts of my youthful muse,
Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their powers.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his favourite beech.
Then MILTON had indeed a poet's charms ;
New to my taste, his Paradise surpassed 710
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence ; I danced for joy.
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
Engaged my wonder, and admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret supposed
The joy half lost because not sooner found.
There too, enamoured of the life I loved,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determined, and possessing it at last 720
With transports such as favoured lovers feel,
I studied, prized, and wished that I had known,
Ingenious Cowley ! and though now reclaimed
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit

Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools ;
I still revere thee, courtly though retired,
Though stretched at ease in Chertsey's silent bowers,
Not unemployed, and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse. 730
'Tis born with all : the love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound, man,
Infused at the creation of the kind.
And though the Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes
And touches of his hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found
Twins at all points — yet this obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in his works,
And all can taste them : minds that have been formed 740
And tutored with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmoved.
It is a flame that dies not even there
Where nothing feeds it : neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city life,
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms, quench it or abate.
The villas with which London stands begirt,
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads,
Prove it. A breath of unadulterate air, 750
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame !
Even in the stifling bosom of the town,
A garden in which nothing thrives has charms
That soothe the rich possessor ; much consoled
That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well
He cultivates. These serve him with a hint
That Nature lives ; that sight-refreshing green

Is still the livery she delights to wear, 760

Though sickly samples of the exuberant whole.

What are the casements lined with creeping herbs,

The prouder sashes fronted with a range

Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,

The Frenchman's darling? Are they not all proofs

That man, immured in cities, still retains

His inborn inextinguishable thirst

Of rural scenes, compensating his loss

By supplemental shifts, the best he may?

The most unfurnished with the means of life, 770

And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds

To range the fields and treat their lungs with air,

Yet feel the burning instinct; over-head

Suspend their crazy boxes, planted thick,

And watered duly. There the pitcher stands

A fragment, and the spoutless teapot there;

Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets

The country, with what ardour he contrives

A peep at nature, when he can no more.

Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease 780

And contemplation, heart-consoling joys

And harmless pleasures, in the thronged abode

Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life!

Address himself who will to the pursuit

Of honours, or emolument, or fame,

I shall not add myself to such a chase,

Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.

Some must be great. Great offices will have

Great talents: and God gives to every man

The virtue, temper, understanding, taste, 790

That lifts him into life, and lets him fall

Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.

To the deliverer of an injured land

He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart
To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs;
To monarchs dignity ; to judges sense ;
To artists ingenuity and skill ;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wished.

NOTES.

THE WINTER EVENING.

The Task. The title refers to the *task* imposed on Cowper by Lady Austen, when she said, "Oh! you can write on any subject;—write upon this sofa." "The Sofa" is the title of the first book of "The Task."

1-15. *Introduction, the arrival of the postman bringing news of the world outside. His appearance, due to the frost of the wintry evening. His care for the safe delivery of the letters, contrasted with his indifference as to their contents, whether good news or bad.*

1. 'Tis. It is, *i. e.*, the sound which you hear is.

Twanging. Sounding sharp and loud. "Twang" is the same word as "tang," which occurs in Shakespeare's "Tempest," in Stephano's song, II. II.

'For she had a tongue with a tang,
Would cry to a sailor, go hang!'

The word *twang* is an imitation of the horn.

O'er. Beyond, the other side of. Another way of explaining the construction would be to read it as "the horn twanging o'er (*i. e.*, along) the bridge, while the postman is crossing." This inversion, however, is unlikely.

Bridge. The bridge over the Ouse at Olney (pronounce, Ōney).

2. **Wearisome.** Meaning either wearisome to the eye from its monotonous length, or the word may be taken almost as a transferred epithet. The traveller becomes weary when crossing the bridge; the idea of weariness is transferred from the traveller to the bridge. The bridge in question has no pretensions to any architectural beauty, being a long and monotonous succession of arches. The length is, however, needful on account of the floods. The Ouse travels so slowly that it is very difficult to say, from looking at it, in which direction the water goes. The result of this is, of course, that as there is so little fall in the level of the land, heavy rains flood the river till it spreads all over the valley on each side.

3. **Bestrides.** Traverses, crosses, stretches over from bank to bank. The *be*,—prefixed, gives a transitive force to intransitive verbs; as *beseem*, *bewail*, *behowl*; also an intensive force to transitive verbs as *bereave*, *besiege*, *besmear*. In composition also with substantives it forms verbs; as, *behead*, *befriend*, *betide*.

Wintry is not a general epithet of flood, but is used to indicate the season of the year. The word, *wintry*, here suggests breadth, as the stream would be fuller in winter than in summer, because of the heavy winter rains. The whole description appeals to the eye and we have nothing to do with the *coldness* of the water, which *might* have been indicated by the word *wintry*.

4. **Sees her unwrinkled face** Is calmly reflected. The water is smooth or unwrinkled, because it is a frosty night, as we learn from the sixth line (*frozen locks*), and such nights are usually calm and still.

Bright, an adverb, brightly. These adjectival forms of adverbs were originally datives in 'e,' e. g. *brighte*. The case-ending was afterwards lost, and the words are now spelt like the uninflected adjective.

5. **He comes.** "He" is the postman who has not been mentioned before, but the pronoun is anticipatory, the real subject being "herald." Stuart in a note on Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel," II., XXV., quotes Tennyson: "They crossed themselves for fear, all the knights at Camelot," where "they" anticipates the real subject, "all the knights."

Herald. Messenger. The postman is the messenger of the 'world,' i. e., of the social, commercial, and political outside world, with which the poet in his 'retreat' has no immediate connection. But we know from many of the references in Cowper's Letters, that though in a quiet retreat at Olney, he nevertheless took a keen interest in affairs of the "noisy world." See also note on l. 25. **Noisy.** Busy, bustling.

6. **Spattered.** Sprinkled with mud. The postman rode on horseback. **Strapped.** Belted. **Frozen locks.** The moisture has become congealed into white frost on his hair.

7. **Lumbering.** Tumbling about in a clumsy manner. The letters and papers were carried in a bag slung behind the postman's back. This word 'lumber' has, perhaps, no connection with 'lumber,' cumbersome articles, heavy useless furniture, &c. To *lumber* is according to Skeat a Scandinavian word, meaning to make a rolling noise, as "The lumbering of the wheels" in Cowper's "John Gilpin." The postman's bag, however, would not make much noise, and it is

possible that this use of *lumber*, *tumble about*, is got from the noun, *lumber*. This word is derived from the Lombards, inhabitants of Lombardy in North Italy, who were for a long time the principal pawn-brokers and bankers of England. Lombard Street, in London, still commemorates by its name this fact, for many great banking firms have their offices there, where in the 14th and 15th centuries the Lombard bankers dwelt.

A pawn-broker's store would contain quantities of cumbrous and more or less useless articles, and such articles accordingly got the name of '*lumber*.'

8. **True to his charge.** Faithful in the execution of his duty, the conveyance of the post-bag. *True*, etc., may be called a pendent construction. Perhaps the best way of explaining such passages, which are very common, is to look on them as a mixture of two constructions, *viz.*, "True to his charge he carefully conducts it to the destined inn," and "The one concern of this true servant is to conduct his charge," &c. To get rid of this, one must suppose '*him*' to be understood in '*his*.' This would give 'The one concern of him true to his charge. . . . is to conduct,' etc. In other words the adjective "*true*" qualifies the *noun-idea*, *i. e.*, "*the man*," in the possessive adjective "*his*."

Close packed. Tightly packed, the letters and parcels being pressed close together. In compounds such as this, the adjective is used adverbially; *e. g.*, close-packed = closely packed, thin-spun = thinly spun, heavy burdened = heavily burdened, loose-fitting = loosely fitting.

9. **Careless.** He is indifferent as to the contents of the bag, though he takes good care of the bag and its contents. "What he brings" is here a noun clause; in more colloquial English we would say "*careless of what he brings*."

His one concern. All he troubles himself about.

10. **Conduct.** Convey. **Destined**, the immediate object of his journey, where he has to leave a bag. He would then have to pass on and leave another bag at another postal station.

Inn. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the inns along the main roads were also the post-offices, for it was there that the mail-coaches and post-boys on horseback changed horses and put their various packages and bags of mails.

11. **Expected**, *sc.* by the postal officials of the place, and by the people anxiously awaiting letters. **Pass on**, *i. e.*, (to) pass on, in connection with *to conduct*.

12. **Whistles**, *sc.* from light-heartedness. **Wretch** is used with good-natured contempt of the man who is so callous to hardship that he can whistle under these circumstances. In the same spirit we should say, 'poor beggar,' 'poor devil.'

13. **Cold**, etc. Gay-hearted in spite of cold and privation. Cf. the passage about the waggoner, lines 350-60.

Messenger of grief perhaps, etc., Note that those to whom the post brings bad news may be counted by thousands, while those who get good news are expressed by 'some,' *i. e.*, a possible few. This is indicative of Cowper's melancholy view of life.

15. **Indifferent** agrees with "whether (it is) grief or joy." Indifferent has two usages. It is applied to persons in the sense of heedless, careless, and, as here, to nouns or noun sentences in the sense of insignificant, of no consequence.

16-35 *The various nature of the letters he brings—financial, domestic, amorous Yet the postman cares no more than his horse. The poet speculates as to the nature of the news. What of our army in America? What news of India? He is impatient to hear what has passed in Parliament.*

16. **Houses in ashes.** The burning of houses. **Fall of stocks.** Depreciation in the price of shares in companies, banks, Government securities, etc. This might mean ruin to hundreds of people, yet the postman does not care.

17. **Births, deaths, and marriages.** These would be in the newspapers or possibly in private letters.

Epistles. Letters. When seriously used, in prose, this word commonly means certain sacred writings of the Apostles, as, the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. In poetry, the word is often used for "letter."

18. **Trickled.** Poured down slowly.

19. **Periods.** Phrases, sentences. The more common meaning is what is called a "full stop," or mark of punctuation (.).

Fluent quill. Rapidly-moving pen. **Fluent** (*i. e.*, flowing) is generally used to describe speed. In former times, pens were made of the wing-feathers (quills) of geese, sharpened to a point.

20. **Charged with.** Filled with, containing. **Amorous** (Lat. *amor*, love). Passionate.

Sighs. Expressions of love. A sigh is a deep respiration indicative of melancholy, regret, or longing. Then it comes to be used in the sense of words expressive of such longing.

"With eyes cast up unto the maiden's tower,
With easy sighs, such as men draw in love."

Surrey, quoted by Washington Irving.

Swains. Young men, rustics, especially in the sense of rustic lovers, as used here.

21. Nymph The feminine correlative of "swain." Really, in classic mythology, the nymphs were the guardian spirits of the woods and streams. Many classic stories tell of the loves of young countrymen or shepherds for the nymphs, so that "swain" and "nymph" came to be synonymous with male and female lovers.

Responsive Answering, with the implication that the answer is favourable. In Goldsmith's line ("Deserted Village," 117) "The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung," the word conveys only the simple idea of answering. **Equally affect, etc., i. e.,** neither of them is in the slightest degree affected.

22. Them all means the different items of the post-boy's load enumerated above.

23. But introduces the adversative relation between the post-boy's indifference and the real importance of the contents of the bag.

Budget. Bag or purse. The Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer or of the Financial member is really a statement of the amount of money in the country's purse. "Budget" is here exclamatory and interjectional, and cannot be said to be in any particular case.

Ushered. Introduced. An usher (F. *huissier*, connected with L. *ostium*, a door) is a door-keeper, and "to usher" means to conduct through a door. The English word was formerly spelt with an "h," as in Spenser's "Faery Queene," I., IV., 13.

"A gentle husher, Vanitie by name."

The 'h' is from the old French *huis*, a door.

24. Heart-shaking. Stirring, exciting.

25. Troops. According to Mr. Storr, those engaged in the American War of Independence, but, as noticed by him, Cowper seems to have been "behind-hand with his news," for the American War was concluded before the "Task" had been even begun.

In a letter to Mr. Newton, dated January 26, 1783, Cowper writes of the Americans as being "at length declared independent." He must, therefore, have been aware of the fact six months later when the "Task" was commenced. Nor is it easy to suppose that he could have forgotten it, for the interest he took in the American question is shown by the following Extract from the same letter:—

"—the Americans, who, if they had contented themselves with a struggle for lawful liberty, would have deserved applause, seem to me to have incurred the guilt of parricide, by renouncing their parent,

by making her ruin their favourite object, and by associating themselves with their worst enemy for the accomplishment of this purpose."

Unless, then, Cowper purposely antedated his work so as to introduce the subject of the American War it is difficult to see what is meant by the troops snoring to the murmurs of the Atlantic.

27. Snore to, etc. Are they still asleep? "To" means "in unison with," or, in response to.

28. India. Fox's bill for transference of the Government of India from the Directors of the East India Company to a Board of seven Commissioners was thrown out by the Lords in 1783, after passing the House of Commons. The Board of Control was established by Pitt in the next year.

Does she wear, etc. This personification of India is familiar now, being often seen in the illustrated papers.

Plumed. Feathered.

30. Grind. Oppress. "The discussions over the rival India Bills created a sense of national responsibility for its (India's) good government."—Green, *Short History of the English People*. The grand debate may mean the debate on Fox's Bill, or may be used generally.

31. Popular harangue. Speech delivered to please and win over the public.

Tart. Sharp, sarcastic.

Logic. Here means, sound argument.

Wit. Epigrammatic smartness of speech and ideas.

33. The loud laugh is, broad humour as distinguished from the more polished "wit" of the preceding line. Cf. Goldsmith's "The loud laugh that speaks the vacant mind." (*Deserted Village*.) The substantives from "the grand debate" to "the loud laugh" are in the accusative by a kind of pendent opposition to "them." The construction is somewhat similar to that of l. 5, on which see Note.

I long to know, sc. by reading the papers in which they are reported.

34. I burn. I am keenly anxious. Wranglers are the debaters alluded to above. The wranglers at Cambridge are so called because in the Middle Ages a candidate for a degree had to hold public debate (wrangle) before being granted it. The persons are put for their utterances, and they are set free by opening the newspapers.

35. Voice. Expression.

We are supposed now to have possession of the papers, and to make things snug and cosy before beginning to read them.

36-49. *Preparations for an indoor evening. How different from the discomforts of the theatre, or the political meeting!*

36. **Stir.** It may not be unnecessary to inform young Indian boys that this is done with a poker, *i. e.*, a bar of iron which is inserted between the bars of the grate and used as a lever to raise the mass of burning coal as well as to riddle out the dead ashes from the bottom of the grate.

Shutters are, or at any rate, were in Cowper's day, covers, usually wooden, for the windows, which fold up during the day-time but are drawn over the windows at night, so as to exclude draughts and act as a general protection. They are fastened by iron bars drawn across. Matters are made still more safe and snug by the curtains which, looped up in the day, are let fall over the windows when the lights are lit.

37. The sofa is wheeled round before the fire by means of casters, *i. e.*, small wheels under the legs of the sofa or other article which, being fitted with swivels, can be turned in any direction.

38. **Urn.** A vessel containing water to make tea, *bubbling* and *hissing* when the water boils.

Bubble is probably an onomatopoetic word, like *twanging* in l. 1.

39. **Steamy column** is the vapour which rises in a cloud from the hot urn. **Cups**, *sc.* of tea.

40. **That cheer but not, etc.** We should usually insert 'do' before 'not,' or better, write, 'cheer without inebriating.'

Inebriate. 'Make drunk.

Wait on each, are served to each of us.

41. **So.** Under such conditions. The conditions are introduced by 'while' in l. 38.

42. Very different from the above is the evening of that man who, etc.

His is emphatic.

Who. The antecedent of this relative pronoun is the *noun-idea* implied in "his."

Shining, *sc.* with heat and perspiration.

43. **Sweats**, is usually considered a vulgar word in our day when used of a man, though it is the right word to express a similar condition in a horse. We speak of men, "*perspiring*" rather than sweating. At any rate particular people do, but a horse sweats.

44. **Bored.** Prodded, pushed by the sharp elbows of his neighbours, the theatre being crowded.

45. **Out-scolds**, makes more noise by his remonstrances than the actor does in his speeches. *Out* as a prefix has an intensive force, as in out-do, out-go, out-play, out-run, with the added idea of superiority.

Ranting. Making an exaggerated display of action or passion, declaiming noisily, "tearing a passion to tatters."

46. **Throb**. Beat. The sensation meant is the pulsation in the veins of the feet after one has stood long in the same place.

47. **Thumps** is the same as throb, but is a stronger word.

To feed upon the breath. To devour the words.

48. **Patriots** are persons zealous for their country's rights. The word is here used with some sarcasm, the suggestion being that the patriotism is spurious and the 'heroic rage' either simulated or misplaced. It does not seem necessary to suppose any reference to the so-called 'Patriots' who were the opposers of Sir Robert Walpole, the great minister of George I and George II., and who continued through several reigns to form the Opposition.

49. **Placemen**. Persons who attach themselves to a political party, and are very zealous in working for it, merely in order to obtain or retain a well-paid post in the gift of their party when in power.

All tranquillity, etc. Perfectly tranquil and satisfied, *sc.* because they have what they want.

50-72. *The newspaper and its reception by the family. It is an abstract of the world, a little world in itself. The struggles of ambition, political rivalry, outpourings of eloquence, all find their place. Digression satirising the popular orator.*

50. **Folio of four pages** The newspaper. The sheet of printing paper being folded *once*, makes four pages, there being two leaves both of which are printed on each side.

Flappy in that it is free from criticism

51. **Not ev'n critics criticise**. Cowper means that we read newspapers for the news and not for the style as literary critics would read a poem or an essay. His remark would, however, be scarcely applicable to newspapers of our own day. **Holds**. Fixes, retains.

52. **Attention**, the abstract for the concrete. Inquisitive attention is, curious and attentive hearers. Inquisitive is commonly used in a bad sense, but here means no more than 'interested,' desirous of knowing. The word is connected with *enquire, i. e., to find out*.

53. **The fair**. An old-fashioned expression, and a favourite one with Cowper, meaning, the ladies. *Cf.* Dryden's "None but the brave

(*i. e.*, brave men) deserve the fair" (*i. e.*, fair ladies). "The fair" here means Mrs Unwin and Lady Austen.

54. **Eloquent.** A playful allusion to the alleged talkativeness of women.

To break. *I. e.*, the chains of silence.

55. **Map.** Representation in little, epitome. Every phase of life is represented and illustrated in the paper, as every physical feature of a country is represented in a map.

56. **Fluctuations.** Changes, from Lat. *fluctus*=a wave, the idea being taken from the advancing and receding waves of the tide.

Vast concerns. Important transactions.

57. **The mountainous and craggy ridge, etc.** The elevated rank or position. It is mountainous, because lofty and far removed above the level of common men. It is craggy, because it is beset with roughness, *i. e.*, difficulties in the ascent.

In *ridge, rills* (l. 64), *cataracts* (l. 74), *forests* (l. 75), *fields* (l. 77) etc., Cowper carries on in detail his comparison of the newspaper to a map.

58. **Ambition.** The ambitious man. Cf. Attention, in line 52.

59. **The seals of office.** Not necessarily the great seal which is delivered to the Lord Chancellor on his taking office, but perhaps any insignia or mark of official status.

Glitter in his eyes. Allure him.

60. **He pants, sc.** with the exertion, and still more with eagerness and anxiety to get the prize.

Grasps He is on the point of clutching.

61. **Demagogue.** The popular haranguer referred to in line 31.

Such a history as that of the ambitious man ousted by the demagogue is supposed to be related in the papers.

62. **Dexterous.** Clever, skilful, from Lat. *dexter*=right hand.

63. **But to lose them.** With no other result than that of losing them, *i. e.*, the seals of office of l. 59.

64. **Rills.** Outpourings, gushes, like the outpourings of water down a hillside. Oily. Smooth-tongued.

65. **Meanders.** Labyrinths of speech, complicated and intricate oratory. Meander means a winding, from a winding river in Phrygia, so called.

Lubricate the course, etc. Are poured out with glib ease. The *lubricate* carries on the idea of *oil*.

66. **Modest,** ironically used.

Is ashamed, etc. This is the mock modest preamble of the orator.

67. **Engross.** Take up, occupy.

68. **Propitious.** Indulgent, favourable.

69. However **trivial**, still quoted from the speaker's apologetic introduction. Trivial is from Lat. *trivium*, the meeting of cross-roads, where things may be found or easily picked up from the habitual passing of many people.

70. **Sweet bashfulness**, like 'modest,' is ironically used.

Claims. Calls for, deserves.

71. **Dearth.** Scarcity. Dearth is connected with 'dear,' scarce, procured at a high price.

72. It is the 'sweet bashfulness' of line 70. The quality is put for the person.

73-87. *Oratory, nonsense, humours, all find their place in the newspaper The remaining part filled with advertisements, praising quack nostrums for the toilet, giving notice of city feasts, calling attention to various amusing spectacles.*

73. **Cataracts of declamation.** Deluges of oratory. The orator is supposed to thunder or declaim noisily when speaking, and the word is applied by Cowper to his language reproduced in print.

74. **Forests of no meaning.** Wide expanses of printed but meaningless matter.

Spread. Cover over. This verb has two transitive constructions. We may "spread a table" with viands, or we may spread, *i. e.*, arrange, lay out, the articles on a table. There is, besides, the ordinary intransitive use.

75. **Comprehension.** Power of understanding.

Lost. Bewildered with the nonsense which it is trying to understand, as a man loses himself in thick forest.

76. **Fields of pleasantry.** Columns of flippant jests. This is, of course, sarcastic, national troubles being one of the last subjects to be treated with levity.

77. **Descants.** Comments; really an accompaniment in music, or a second voice mingling with the first.

78. **Wilderness.** Hopeless medley. He is now referring to the variety of advertisements in a newspaper.

The confusion is strange, because of the extraordinary and novel nature of some of the advertisements, *e. g.*, ethereal journeys, and Katerfelto's advertisement. It is *gay*, because of the roses, lilies, essences, etc.

80. **Of faded age** modifies both cheeks and brows. The roses and lilies mean cosmetics, red and white paint used to disguise the ravages of age.

Brows. Not, of course, eyebrows, but the forehead.

Faded. Wrinkled, withered.

81. **Teeth.** False teeth.

Ringlets. Curls of false hair.

82. **Heav'n, earth, etc.** All the combined perfumes which can be extracted from things in air, on earth, or in the sea.

83. **Nectareous essences, Olympian dews.** These would be the pretentious names given by advertisers to their articles. This kind of bombastic nomenclature has always been favoured by advertisers. One has only to look at a modern newspaper for any number of examples. Nectar is the food of the gods, Olympus is their habitation.

84. **Sermons.** These, too, are advertised.

City feasts. These are celebrated for their magnificence and luxury, especially the Lord Mayor's banquet, and the dinners of the City Companies.

Fav'rite airs. Popular melodies.

85. **Ethereal journeys.** Balloon ascents.

Submarine exploits. Operations under water. The diving bell, which in a more or less imperfect form had long been known, was greatly improved by Smeaton, the builder of the old Eddystone Lighthouse in the English Channel, who used it in clearing foundations for a pier at Ramsgate. This was years previous to the composition of 'The Task.'

86. **Katerfelto.** A quack and conjurer of the period.

With his hair on end, surprised. The effect of astonishment or fright is supposed to be to erect the hair. In the book of Job, iv., 15, Eliphaz describing his fearful vision says: "The hair of my flesh stood up," and in Hamlet, I., v., the effect of great fear is to make

"Each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

It seems likely that Cowper is alluding to the ordinary appearance of Katerfelto's hair, which he humorously accounts for by attributing it to the astonishment caused by his own marvels.

87. **Wond'ring for his bread.** Performing wonderful tricks by which he gets his living.

88-106. *Contrast between the busy world and the poet's life of retirement. The pleasure derived by the contemplative man from his observation of the world without. He watches wars unmoved, the passions which produce them he regrets, but they do not alarm him.*

88. **Loop-holes.** Narrow windows, usually the narrow openings in the wall of a fortress, through which soldiers can fire. Cowper compares his position in retirement to that of a man in a building who watches securely through a loop-hole what is going on in his neighbourhood.

89. **To peep.** To watch without being noticed. The word peep would be properly used of a man looking through a loop-hole, and in the same way Cowper, himself unobserved and unnoticed peeps, through the medium of the newspaper, at what is going on in the world.

Stir. Bustle.

Babel. Confused uproar of the world. London is often called the great Babel, but Cowper here means the great struggle and business of life. The name is taken from Genesis xi., 1-9: "Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth." The word has been supposed to be put for *balbel*, from Hebrew *balal* to mix, but is now said to have been a contraction from *beth Bel*, House of Belus

90. **And not feel.** Without feeling

91. **Through all her gates.** The name of the city, Babel, having been used to represent the bustle of the world, the figure is now continued in the use of 'gates.' Through all her gates, means from every quarter.

92. **At a safe distance.** Qualifies either "hear" or "the roar."
Dying sound. Lessened by distance dying away.

93. **Uninjured ear.** Ear not stunned or violently disturbed by the noise of 'Babel,' which is softened to a murmur.

94. **Surveying.** In its literal meaning of over-looking from a height.

Then at ease. Free from anxiety, because he is a spectator only and not a sharer in the contest going on before him.

This and the next three lines seem to be a recollection of the poet's translation of Vincent Bourne's Latin poem, *The Jack-daw*.

"Fond of the speculative height
Thither he wings his airy flight,
And thence securely sees
The bustle and the raree-show, [show of strange things]
That occupy mankind below,
Secure and at his ease."

96. **Secure.** Not *safe*, but in its real meaning of "free from care" Cowper says that he is far removed from the busy world that its troubles cannot reach him, and so he is "secure," free from care. Here the epithet is transferred from the person to the place.

97. That liberates, etc., *sc.* on account of this philosophical indifference to what is going on.

Exempts. Frees from responsibility.

98. It turns. The affairs of the world go on.

99. Generations. All its various races of inhabitants.

100. Am still. Am unmoved, take no share in the tumult.

102. Mourn. Regret the existence of. The word sometimes means, to regret the absence of, as "I'd mourn the hopes that leave me," or, to sorrow for the loss of such dear one, as "He mourns for his father."

103. That makes man a wolf to man. Makes man savagely attack his fellow-man.

104. Brazen throats are trumpets which are taken as emblematic of war.

105. Speaks the language of his heart. His fierce passions are uttered in the trumpet's sound.

106. And sigh, etc. This is in effect a repetition of what has been said in line 102:—"Grieves but alarms me not."

107-119. *The poet, without trouble, visits many countries in the world, for he reads the reports of travellers, Thus, without stirring from home, he shares the wanderer's troubles and successes.*

107. He. Man.

Expatiates is used in the physical sense. *Expatiar* (Lat.) is to get out of the course, to spread, extend. The meaning of 'expatiates,' in the text is 'roams.' The ordinary meaning is to digress, or talk diffusely on a subject.

109. Manners, customs. Manners refer more to people considered separately, customs to a nation or people. Customs implies important and general usages. The customs of a country are prevalent and general, the manners may vary in the individuals.

Policy. Mode of Government.

110. Pay contributions, etc. Contribute to swell his stock of information.

Gleans. Gathers; used generally of the gathering of stray ears of corn in a harvest-field, after the reapers have collected the greater part.

111. Sucks intelligence. This expression is used, because man has been compared to a bee. For the same reason the information he collects is called honey.

112. Deep research. Careful and painstaking enquiries.

114. He travels, and I too. I accompany him in his travels by reading his account of them.

Tread his deck, etc. Accompany him on the voyage.

115 Peering. Sharp, watchful. I see things through the medium of his description.

117. Suffer his woes, etc. I sympathize with him in his dangers and adventures.

118. Fancy. Imagination.

119. Runs the great circuit. Travels over the countries described in the traveller's book. The meaning appears to be: "As the finger of a clock travels with one end round the circle while the other end always remains at the same point (centre), so my fancy, though I am all the time conscious of my identity and locality, leads me in imagination over all the places described and identifies me with the writer."

120-128. *Winter, the season of defacement and deformity. Description of the season. The poet's regard for it. The loss of daylight compensated for by the long, cosy winter evenings, when the family is re-united round the social hearth.*

120. Inverted, literally turned upside down. The idea here seems to be that of complete change. The year at its brightest, when the days are longest, is in its *upright* or natural condition. When the gloomy, short hours of winter arrive all this is changed, turned topsy-turvy, 'inverted.' The expression is taken immediately from Thomson's "Seasons" (1726). Winter is said to rule over the year in this inverted condition. Winter is not the ruler of the year absolutely, but as long as this condition lasts.

121. Scattered. Winter is represented as an old man, and his hair is therefore thin or scattered. The word may also refer to the appearance of the fields, with their thin grass, or to the leafless woods, in winter.

Sleet is hail or snow mingled with rain. The fine particles of sleet or snow fill the old man's hair like dust or ashes. To throw ashes on the head was an old Hebrew sign of mourning. Thus the earth is represented as an old grey-haired man in mourning for vanished youth, for its past summer.

122. Thy breath, etc. See note on 'frozen locks,' line 6.

123. Fringed. Bordered.

Other snows, real snows, not metaphorical snows of age as often used by poets. Ashes is also used in the same way.

Cf. Tennyson's, "Merlin and Vivien"—

"The lists (fringe) of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes."

and, "Palace of Art"—

"And there the Ionian father of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin,
A hundred winters snowed upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin."

124. **Clouds** are, during certain states of the weather, the accompaniments of winter, but not always, for during hard, frosty nights, the sky is often clear.

125. **A leafless branch**, etc. In winter the trees, except ever-greens, are bare.

Sceptre. The golden rod which is the sign of kingship. Cowper says that winter rules the year, and he carries on the idea by giving it a sceptre and a throne.

126. **A sliding car.** A sledge, a carriage with long steel runners instead of wheels. In countries, such as Russia or Canada, where the snow lies long on the ground, the sledge is the best means of travelling in winter. This is, however, a characteristic of Winter in the wide sense, not of Winter in England. It is seldom that the frozen snow lies long enough on the ground to admit of sledging.

127. **Urged by storms.** Driven along by the swift wind. This is merely a fanciful picture intended to give force to the personification of Winter. Sleighs are drawn by horses or dogs.

128. **Unlovely.** Unattractive.

As thou seem'st. Although thou seem'st.

129. **Dreaded** on account of accompanying hardships, cold, etc. The word would have a special reference to the poor who are unable to procure sufficient fuel and clothing to keep themselves warm.

Thou hold'st the sun a prisoner. In winter the sun does not rise till a late hour, and the mornings up to about eight o'clock are very dark.

130. **Undawning**, not lighted by the early sun.

131. **Short'ning** qualifies, 'thou.'

Noon, twelve o'clock. The etymology of this word is peculiar.

The Roman day began at six o'clock; seven o'clock was the first hour. The ninth hour was therefore three o'clock. This ninth hour, *nona hora*, was the time of eating the chief meal. In England, of old, the dinner hour was twelve o'clock, and the English attaching more importance apparently to feeding than to the proper designation of the hour, called their dining hour noon, from *nona hora*, ignoring the fact that it differed by three hours from the dining hour of the Romans. Skeat's account differs a little from this. He

says: "Nones was the old Church service at three, which afterwards retained its name though the hour was changed."

132. **Impatient** appears to qualify, Winter. The sun can scarcely be meant, as he is *hurried down* by Winter, an idea which would be inconsistent with his own impatience.

133. **Kindly** is an adverb=mercifully, benevolently.

The rosy west. Referring to the red and gold colours of a sun-set. In winter, the sun sets early, very often with deep red stretches of colour.

134. **Compensating**, atoning for, supplying. This word has two usages. We compensate a person for what he has lost, and we also compensate his loss. The former is the more usual construction. Compensate is also used of the *thing* which equals or supplies the place of another.

Added, additional The days are shorter, the evenings are therefore longer, and there is more time for indoor pursuits, *e.g.*, reading, conversation, etc.

135. **Instructive ease**, instruction combined with entertainment.

136. **At short notice**, because they all come indoors when night falls, and meet, perhaps, round the tea-table as already described.

137. **Fixing.** Concentrating.

Thought means probably the different thoughts of the various members of the family which have been distracted by the several pursuits of the day.

The phrase *fixing thought* may also mean that the various members of the family have thought of many different things in the day, according to their occupation; but in the evening they gather together, and all think of, and discuss, the same subjects.

I crown thee, etc. I hail thee as the king or presiding genius.

139-157. *Winter, the season of family comfort and joy. Contrast between humble domestic pleasures and the so-called pleasures of the great world. A typical evening in the poet's home, and its occupations, such as embroidery.*

139. **Intimate** is perhaps used in the Latin sense of innermost, *i.e.*, delights closely connected with the heart and domestic life, and apart from outdoor occupations; or it may mean delights (pleasure) arising from intimate and familiar converse.

140. **Fire-side enjoyments.** The pleasures of home and domesticity, since the fireside is the gathering centre of a family on winter nights.

Home-born happiness, conveys very much the same idea.

141. **Lowly.** Not humble, in the sense of holding poor occupants, for, though not rich, Cowper and his friends were on the whole free from the cares of poverty. **Lowly** means unpretentious, and Cowper probably means to contrast his own retired cottage with the great households and elaborate living arrangements of the great people of the earth.

142. **Undisturbed,** because there would be few or none to visit them in such an out of the way place as Olney, especially during a winter evening. "When the days are short we make (our) excursion in the former part of the day, between church time and dinner. At night we read and converse, as before, till supper."

"From twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please" (See, line 138, 'The family dispersed').—*Extracts from letters.*

144. **No ratt'ling wheels, etc.** No carriages pull up suddenly.

Gates. Rather an ambitious kind of word though unintentionally used. It means no more than the door of the house Cowper somewhat whimsically refers to his door as the gates of a great man's house.

145. **Powder'd.** Having the hair plastered with what is called 'powder,' i. e., usually starch moistened and made into a kind of paste.

Footmen. The indoor male domestic servants, in wealthy houses, still have their hair covered with this powder.

Pert. Impudent, flippant. The impertinence of footmen is proverbial, and is a fruitful theme of satire in the pictures of "Punch." Thackeray's "Jeames de la Pluche" gives an admirable sketch of a footman.

Proficient is a noun=expert, one well skilled.

146. **Sounding an alarm.** Knocking double knocks at the door. This is usually done by the footman or attendant of great ladies when they pay visits. To sound the "rat-tat-tat" of a double knock requires considerable practice and some skill.

Assaults. Strikes at (with the knocker).

147. **Rings.** Echoes.

Stationary. Standing still. Distinguish this word from stationery, writing materials.

148. **Cough their own knell.** Catch their death of cold. The cough is a symptom of the ill-effects from standing in the cold, and as such a cough may be fatal, its sound is compared to a knell, i. e., the sound of a funeral bell.

149. The silent circle, the visitors with their entertainer or entertainers. They are presumably 'silent' from the stiffness and awkwardness often seen among a knot of people imperfectly acquainted with each other. Cf Shelley's *Peter Bell the Third*.

A party in a parlour

All silent.

Fan themselves. This is to shew the contrast between the warm room inside and the bitter cold in which the shivering horses are kept standing.

Quake refers, it would seem, to the horses. Mr. Storr seems to take it with circle. He says: "They fan themselves, though they are cold, from pure affectation." It is not easy to see why people who keep carriages and footmen should be cold. The reception rooms would be warmed, and their warmth, as already said, is contrasted with the outside cold. At the same time if *quake* goes with *steeds* the noun and its verb are awkwardly separated.

150. Its busy task. Embroidering.

151. The pattern grows. The representation of a flower or lambkin or other object becomes more defined and complete as stitch after stitch is added.

Well-depicted. Skilfully imitated, as a painter reproduces the colours of a flower (Lat. *pingere, pictum*=to paint.)

Wrought into. Worked into the white lawn. The wool is drawn through and through the lawn, and is not a mere superficial coat on the outside.

152. Patiently, refers not only to the quiet perseverance of the worker, but to the time occupied in working the pattern. In the "Sofa," line 34, needlework is called sublime, and the "work" usually produced is described:—

"There might ye see the peony spread wide,
The full-blown rose, the shepherd and his lass,
Lapdog and lambkin with black staring eyes,
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak."

Lawn, is the white material on which the embroidery is worked.

153. Unfolds its bosom. Grows bigger and bigger, as a rosebud unfolds into the full-blown rose.

Sprigs. Small twigs or shoots.

154. Tendrils. Spiral shoots, especially of creeping plants, vines, etc.

Gracefully. With pleasing effect.

Disposed. Arranged.

155. Follow. Come into existence where the fingers summon them, *sc.* by insertion of the woollen threads.

Fair. See line 53 and Note, also "Sofa," line 7.

156. Cannot fade. Cannot wither in the ordinary sense in which flowers wither. The colours, however, of even these artificial flowers might fade.

That blow with most success, etc. Artificial flowers, *i. e.*, the representation of flowers on lawn or canvas is or was the favourite occupation of the long winter evenings, at the season when real flowers are dead.

To blow is to blossom. *Cf.* Wordsworth's "The meanest flower that blows."

158-193. Reading aloud, especially poetry and history, another diversion music, both of voice and instrument, relieving the tedium of needlework. Supper follows, simple as the old Roman meal. Conversation, both serious and gay, though never dull or frivolous. Religious discussion, and praise and thanks to God for benefits conferred. Such evenings more desirable even than Horace's

159. Made vocal. Read aloud.

160. The sprightly lyre. Appears to have been a *harpstichord*, the early form of the modern piano. Its strings, however, were not struck by small feet hammers, but plucked with quills.

"How different is the complexion of your evenings and mine ;

One of the ladies has been playing on the harpsichord, while I, with the other, have been playing at battledore and shuttlecock"—Letter to Mr. Hill, Dec. 7, 1782.

Treasure is in the objective after "shakes out," *touch* being the nominative.

161. Trembling. Vibrating in response to the touch.

Shakes out. Shakes is used, because the sound is produced by vibration.

Chord. Not a harmonious combination of sound, but a string.

162. Symphonious Harmonizing, etc., with the instrument. **Distinct.** Heard separately.

163. Charming strife Pleasing contention between voice and instrument as if they rivalled each other.

Triumphant still. Always predominant, *i. e.*, heard above the instrumental music.

164. Beguile. Help to pass.

Set a keener edge on. Add a zest or impetus to. The monotonous task of embroidering is relieved by listening to the music.

165. **Female industry.** The embroidery described above.
The threaded steel. The needle

166. **Unfelt.** Easily, without any sense of trouble, because lightened by the music.

167. **The volume closed.** Absolute construction=when I have done reading.

The customary rites. Usual observances. Among these would probably be, in a religious family like the one described, saying grace, or asking a blessing on the food.

168. **The last meal.** Supper.

A Roman meal, equalling in its simplicity the *cæna* or meal of the ancient Romans.

169. **The mistress of the world.** Rome.

Once found delicious. Was perfectly contented with.

170. **Her patriots of high note.** Her lofty minded patriots. The description refers to the manners of the early republican Romans who were satisfied to sup on an egg and a radish or lettuce (*lactuca*). In later times the Romans were as remarkable for their luxurious habits as their predecessors had been for their severe simplicity.

171. **Humble doors.** Note that this is to be taken literally. More usually when a man invites another to enter his humble door or under his humble roof, he refers not so much to the actual door or roof as to his own social condition, though the adjective is often used from affected humility or a self-depreciation which is thought to be polite. In the text, however, 'humble' is applied not to the rank of the patriot but to the actually rude nature of his dwelling.

172. **Domestic,** because it overshadows the home (*domus*).

174. **Discourse ensues.** Conversation follows the supper.
Not trivial. Not mixed with levity. See note 1. 69.
Dull. Tedious.

175. **With a frown.** Austere.

Play of fancy. Exercise of imagination.

176. **Proscribes.** Forbids. The word has a curious origin. In ancient Rome, when a citizen was outlawed, his name was written up (*scribere*=to write) in the forum, for the information of the populace. He was thus forbidden to come within the city or to exercise his legal rights as a citizen of Rome.

177. **The impious world** is that portion of society which was untouched by the religious revival of which Wesley and Whitefield were the great promoters in the 18th century.

178. **Frenzy.** Fanaticism, bigotry.

179. **An intruder**, etc. Foreign to and incompatible with enjoyment.

180. **Start**, *sc.* with reluctance to hear it.

181. **Jarring**. Discordant, disagreeable.

Mrs. Unwin is described as cheerful and by no means destitute of humour, ready to laugh and indulge in harmless mirth and only puritanical when discussing the most serious subjects, and this description accords closely with the above lines.

Themes. *Nom.* Absolute. Themes of a graver tone are religious subjects

182. **Gratitude and love** are put for the expression of these feelings.

183. **Retrace**, *sc.* in our conversation.

Pointing wand, is an indicator. The memory summons events before us as a person might use a wand or rod in pointing out places or subjects on a map or picture.

185. **The broken snare**. *I e.*, the temptation which we have avoided.

Cowper frequently introduces scriptural expressions, and this "broken snare" is from the Psalms. "The snare is broken and we are delivered."

186. **The disappointed foe** is the Devil who has failed in his efforts at temptation. The real objects in this and the following line must be looked for in the participle or adjective appended to the noun rather than the noun itself, as if we had, disappointment of the foe, finding of deliv'rance, preservation of life, and restoration of peace.

187. **Unlook'd for**. Unexpected.

Fruits. Results, blessings derived from. The word is in apposition with dangers, snare, foe, etc.

190. **The Sabine bard** is Horace, who frequently in his poems mentions with pleasure his rural retreat in the Sabine district, some distance from Rome. The evenings worthy of the Gods, are evenings spent in country retirement.

192. **As**. Inasmuch as they are.

Illumined. Enlightened, *sc.* by the truths of religion.

With nobler truths. With the truths of the Christian religion, which Cowper says are nobler than the philosophy and religion that would be discussed at Horace's supper-table.

194-206. *Other popular amusements unnecessary. The discomforts of the theatre, productive of no such pure pleasure as the poet's evening.*

194. *Is winter hideous*, etc. Cannot such occupations as I have described make winter nights pass pleasantly?

195. *He*. Winter, who is still personified.

Tragic fur. Possibly the furs, ermine, etc., worn by kings and queens in tragedy, or it may refer to the magnificent dresses of Greek tragic actors or to the earliest times when they were clad in goat skins.

The smoke of lamps, *sc.* in the theatre.

196. *Pent-up*. Confined, without ventilation.

Unsav'ry throng. Ill-smelling crowd. This is from being confined for a long time in a close ill-ventilated room. A slight tendency to coarseness is sometimes observable in Cowper.

197. *To thaw him into feeling*. To moderate the severity of the weather by diverting his mind.

198. *Snappish*. Sharp, tart.

Flippant. Pert, impudent.

199. *Call comedy*. The poet refuses to recognize the name of comedy as being correctly applied to comedies of the later school, such as those of Congreve and Wycherly.

Prompt him with a smile. This appears to be an unusual construction. Amusement might prompt a smile, and we prompt a person with a hint to memory, or to do a certain action, but the smile is here the end attained. We can speak of prompting a person with a smile when the smile is a hint towards something else, but scarcely when the smile is the result of something else as here. Prompt him *to* a smile, would perhaps be more correct.

200. *Self-complacent*. Pleased with his own performances and abilities.

201. *Stealing a sidelong glance*. Looking furtively, *sc.* because he does not wish his interest or anxiety to be perceived.

House. Theatre.

202. *The slope of faces*. Faces rising in tier over tier from pit to gallery.

203. *Master spring*. Universal motive. The people are all moved to laughter by the one actor, just as all the wheels of a clock are driven by the main-spring.

204. *Universal* General.

205. *Speaks* Indicates, betrays.

206. *Refined*. Pure, free from coarseness.

207-231. *Cards also unnecessary*. The passage of time in the poet's household contrasted with that in the lives of worldlings. A description of Time personified. The rush and scurry of the great

world and its effects even upon young girls, who even as children ape the manners, and take part in the frivolous amusements, of their parents.

207. **Cards.** *I.e.* playing-cards. Games of chance, were looked on with suspicion and dislike by the Methodists, and are still viewed with horror by people of severe religious views.

Were is subjunctive.

Tricks, means, stratagems, devices to while away the time of idle people.

208. **Idleness.** The abstract for the concrete=idle people.

209. **To fill the void,** etc. To occupy the vacant hours of those who have no intellectual resources.

210. **Palliate dulness.** Relieve heaviness and tedium.

Give time a shove. Make time pass, or go quickly.

211. **Has a dove's wing.** Passes gently.

212. **Unsoil'd** Uncontaminated by the wickedness of the world.

Of a silken sound. The metaphor of the dove's wing is continued. Silken=soft, tender, like the sound made by silk when rubbed gently.

213. **The world's time,** time as spent by worldly persons.

In masquerade. Disguised, spent in an unnatural way. A dance in which all the dancers are disguised and wear black masks over the top part of the face is called a masked ball or masquerade. The dove having been used as typical of time passed by a quiet and pious family like the poet's, an impossible bird is chosen to typify the time of worldlings

214. **Should I paint him.** Were I to endeavour to represent him.

Pinicns. Wing-feathers.

215. **Motley.** Variegated. Cowper possibly uses the word with a suppressed reference to motley as the garb, in former days, of the fools kept by rich men for their amusement, thus indicating his contempt for worldly amusements. The word is of doubtful origin, but is found in English as early as Chaucer.

Where, *sc.* in the peacock's train.

216. **Azure eyes.** The eyes are the spots in the train. Argus, called Panoptes, the all-seeing, had a hundred eyes, some of which were always awake. At his death Hera transplanted his eyes into the peacock's tail.

Is tintured. Is coloured *Lat. tingere, tinctum,* to stain. This agrees with 'time,' understood after 'theirs,' in line 214.

217. Spots quadrangular, etc. The diamonds on cards.

Ensanguined hearts. Hearts having the colour of blood. The so-called hearts are from the French *cœur* (heart), which according to Brewer, is a corruption of *chœur* (chorus), choir men. The spade, according to the same authority, is the French form of a pike head, the club is the trefoil or triple clover, while the diamond represents building tiles. Cards are commonly said to have been invented for the amusement of Charles VI., the mad King of France, *temp.* Henry V. of England; but, according to other accounts, they are of Indian origin. The expressions in the text, 'typical of strife,' and 'emblem of untimely graves,' represent the poet's own idea only.

218. Typical of strife. Cowper looks on clubs as weapons, possibly thinking of how London apprentices used them in old days. Their cry "clubs, clubs!" was the signal to gather them together in bands for protection or offence.

220. Hour-glass. This is one of the emblems of time. Time is usually represented with an hour-glass, a scythe indicating that he destroys or mows down everything, and a head bald with the exception of a single lock of hair on the forehead, for we must catch time by the *forelock*. When he is past, we cannot seize him.

221. The dice box and the billiard mast (cue) indicate the way in which those who are, from Cowper's point of view, frivolous worldlings, spend their time. The hour-glass and the dice-box are of almost the same shape.

222. Well does, etc. Performs effectively, for time in such employments is quickly wasted. Readers of Thackeray's "Esmond" will remember Beatrix's allusion to the 'new game' of 'a billiard,' but billiards were known to Shakspeare. See Antony and Cleopatra II. V.

His *i. e.* Time's

223. Thus deck'd. With these accessories, thus ornamented.

A world. The indefinite article is used because the poet conceives the possibility of several worlds, a serious world, a frivolous world etc. of people.

224. His true worth, his real (*i. e.* his slight) value. The value of time is great, but time spent in this way is worthless.

Most pleased qualifies 'world.'

225. Whose only happy, etc. Frivolous people think that they are happy only when wasting their time in trivial amusements.

226. Misses. Young girls.

227. Back string. Pinafore.

Bib. A piece of linen or other cloth tied under the chin at meal times to prevent the dress from being stained. This is usually worn only by children.

230. Board. Card table.

231. Trick. Stratagem, artifice, *not* the number of cards played in a round which is also called a trick.

232. Truce with. Enough of. The image is taken from the *truce* arranged between armies, by which fighting stops.

Roving as, etc. If I wander in this way from one subject to another.

233. Where shall I find, etc. This is a question of appeal, I shall never find, etc

234-38. As he .nothing worth This is an example of the epic simile, a long, elaborate comparison between the details of a theme the poet is treating, and those of some really external incident or picture. Cowper, in this way, imitates some of the elaborate and beautiful epic similes of Milton.

235. Mould'ring. Crumbling to decay

236. Seen When he has seen it.

237. Prints it. *I. e.*, the description of it.

238. How far he went, etc. Only the first part of this line is in the indirect narration after 'know,' for the traveller does not publish the fact that it "was nothing worth." This is known only to himself and the poet.

239. Pallet, or palette, is a small oval shaped board on which the painter mixes his colours.

240. For a far different use, sc. because the description of trivialities like these is foreign to the general tenor of the poem.

241. Paint cards, etc. Describe trifles.

242. That Fancy finds, etc. That suggest itself to my wandering thoughts.

243-266. Invocation to Evening. The poet personifies *Evening* as a matron, followed by *Night*. The blessings conferred on humanity by the approach of *Evening*, bringing forgetfulness of cares and worries. The poet's joy, and his tranquillity, whatever may be his evening occupations.

243. Evening. Not such a one as described above, but evening as spent by me and my friends, a season of peace. This invocation to *Evening* may be compared with the opening of Collin's famous *Ode to Evening*.

245. Methinks, is now written as one word. It consists of *me* in the dative case, and *thinks*, an old impersonal verb equivalent to

the Latin *videtur*, radically connected no doubt with our verb I think, 'he thinks,' but quite distinct from it.—Earle's Philology of the English Tongue. Compare meseems, melists, etc

Streaky. Variegated with the different colours of sunset.

246. Matron-step. This is perhaps a recollection of Warton's address to evening: "Hail! meek-eyed matron, clad in sober grey"

247. Treads on, etc. Follows quickly and closely in thy track. In poetry, the dawn and the evening are often described as walking or treading. Cf. Shakespear's—

See where the dawn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill."

Hamlet, I. i.

Or Milton's—

"Now came still Evening on."

Sweeping train. Evening is painted as a great lady clad in a long robe, which sweeps the ground behind her, like a queen's mantle

248. The curtain of repose. It may be necessary to inform Indian readers that beds in Europe are frequently closed in by heavy curtains which shut out all light. The curtain here is the darkness of night. The action of letting fall the curtain must be supposed to occupy some time, although in the Winter, which season Cowper is referring to, darkness comes more quickly when the shades have begun to close than in the other seasons. Euripides ("Orestes," 175) calls night the sleep-giver of wearied mortals.

249. Charged. Filled See line 20.

250. Sweet oblivion. Forgetfulness of sorrow brought by sleep. Sir Philip Sidney calls sleep "the balm of woe," Shakespeare refers to it as "knitting up the ravelled sleeve of care."

251. Sumptuously adorned. Richly decorated.

252. Homely featured. Unrelieved by any beauty. The evening, meaning the time before night, has its beautiful sunsets as ornament. Night is unrelieved black, and requires the clusters of gems (stars) to set it off. Both are of course personified as females.

253. A star or two. A few stars, notably the evening star, which is brightest just before all the other stars come out.

Just twinkling. Shining faintly, as there is yet light.

254. The moon belongs alike to evening and night.

255. Not worn indeed on high. It is not easy to see the meaning of 'on high,' for the moon may be higher or lower before night than after, according to her phase. We must suppose the poet to be speaking of full moon or nearly full.

Indeed implies a concession. *I admit* that she is not worn on high, etc.

256. Pageantry. Display. A pageant is a spectacle or exhibition. It originally meant a moveable scaffold such as was used in the representation of the old mystery-plays on Biblical subjects. The root is, '*pag*,' in Latin '*pangere*,' to fasten, Greek, '*pegnumi*.'

257. Modest, Unpretentious.

Set in thy zone. Placed in your girdle, *i. e.* low down in the heavens.

Purple, because of the sunset.

258. Of an ampler round. Of larger apparent circumference. When the full moon rises early from the horizon, it appears much larger than when it is high in the heavens.

259. Votary Devotee, worshipper.

260. Composure. Serenity, piece of mind.

262. To books, to music. See lines 158-166.

The poet's toil. Composing verses.

263. To weaving nets, etc. Cowper was very fond of gardening. The nets were to be spread over the trees, *not* to catch the birds, but to prevent them from reaching the fruit, while the open net-work would admit the sun.

264. Twining silken threads, etc. "In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies and in the evening wind thread. Thus did Hercules, and thus probably did Samson, and thus do I." —*Letters*, edited by Southey.

265. They, i. e., the ladies, or 'the fair,' as he calls them.

266. Slight. Despise. I am grateful for thy approach and the opportunities which it brings

267-301. *The brilliant drawing-rooms of the great world contrasted with the poet's dim fire-light. The joys of reverie and the almost vacant mind. The play of the poet's imagination among the shadows and the leaping flames. The benefits conferred by this temporary cessation of serious thought.*

267. Drawing-room. Withdrawing room, a room to which company usually retire from the dining-room, and in which visitors are received.

269. Many a. The origin of this expression is doubtful. Trench derives *many* in this connection from *mesnie*, a train or household. It is, however, in all probability the indefinite numeral, the '*a*' being a corruption of '*of*.' We should in that case expect the plural after '*many a*,' but the singular appears to have been introduced from a confusion of '*a*' (of) with the indefinite article.

270. Goliath. A Philistine giant, slain by David, whose height was six cubits and a span, and the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. See I., Samuel, XVII, 4.

Might have seen, etc. The mirrors are so large that a man big as Goliath could have seen his full length in them.

Giant, an adjective.

271. Tow'ring. Lofty.

Crest. Plume of feathers in the helmet. We are not, however, told that Goliath wore any ornaments of this kind, so the crest may mean simply helmet

272. The position of '*me*' before its governing verb makes it more emphatic. It should be strongly accented in reading.

273. The glowing hearth, etc. I shall not want candles, the dim and uncertain light of the fire being sufficient for me.

274. That uplifts, etc. It would seem that Longfellow must have had this passage in his mind when he wrote.—

"Ere the evening lamps are lighted,
And, like phantoms grim and tall,
Shadows in the fitful fire-light
Dance upon the parlour wall."

275. By fits. At uncertain intervals, irregularly.

276. Dancing. Leaping up and down as the flame rises and falls.

Uncouthly. Grotesquely, wildly. Uncouth meant 'unknown,' from Anglo-Saxon 'cunnan,' to know. What is unfamiliar is looked on as awkward and clumsy, and uncouth is now used in that sense.

To. In response to. As the flame rises and falls, so does the shadow.

277. Not undelightful. Pleasing. The figure meiosis or litotes is used here, *i. e.*, less is said than is meant. When St. Paul said he was a citizen of *no mean* city, he meant that he was a citizen of a *famous* city.

278. Parlour is here an adjective. A parlour (Fr. *parler*, to speak) is a room for conversation, and general use. The word is still used in America but is dying out in England, except, perhaps, in the case of country public-houses whose best room is called a parlour.

279. Thoughtful or unthinking. The reflective as well as the thoughtless or vacant mind. The meaning conveyed by these two words is repeated in the next two lines.

281. Pregnant. Filled, occupied. Pregnant, of course, qualifies mind.

Indisposed. Not in fit mood for.

All, sc. Themes.

282. Laugh ye. You may laugh, laugh if you please, but what I am going to say remains a fact in spite of your ridicule.

Boast is here transitive, sometimes it is followed by 'of.'

Mercurial. Active, sprightly. This word is from Mercury=quicksilver, which is named after Mercury, the messenger of the Gods.

283. Stupor. Cessation of thought, vacuity.

Know no pause, etc. Whose brains are always active and require no repose.

284. I am conscious, etc. There is a slight irregularity of construction here. 'Conscious' should be followed by 'of,' but as the verb 'confess' is transitive and takes an accusative, the word 'soul' is put in that case without a preposition, reference being made to the latter of the two ideas, rather than to the former.

Confess. Is not always used in this construction, being sometimes followed by 'to.' Own is similarly used. The construction with 'to' is, however, perhaps rather colloquial than strictly correct. 'Confess,' here means own the possession of.

285. Fearless, an adverb=fearlessly.

That does not always think. That is sometimes inactive and unoccupied.

286. Ludicrous. Suggestive of ludicrous or grotesque ideas.

Wild. Unregulated.

287. Sooth'd. Pleased.

Waking dream of houses. Reverie, in which I seemed to see houses, etc.

288. Strange visages. Grotesque faces.

Expressed. Represented.

289. Cinders. Here means the red burning coals. It is more commonly used for the dead ashes (*L. cinis*), from which the fire has departed.

Poring. Fixed, earnestly watching.

290. Myself creating. The resemblances of figures seen in the coals are only the work of fancy. One man will imagine a likeness where another will fail to perceive it. The same applies to imaginary figures in the clouds as described in Hamlet, III, II.

"Ham. Do you see that cloud, that's almost in shape like a camel?

Pol. By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

Ham. Methinks, it is like a weasel.

Pol It is back'd like a weasel.

Ham. Or, like a whale?

Pol Very like a whale "

The following quotation from Scott's *Monastery* Vol. I., Chap. VI., will help to illustrate what Cowper says about the fire:—

"Abbot Boniface * * * * * was gazing indolently on the fire, partly engaged in meditation on his past and present fortunes, partly occupied by endeavouring to trace towers and steeples in the red embers.

'Yes,' thought the Abbot to himself, 'in that red perspective I could fancy to myself the peaceful towers of Dundrennan,'" etc.

291. Nor less amused With equal amusement.

Quiescent. Without moving, quietly.

292. Sooty films, are fine light substances, thin as a skin or a cobweb, which are detached from the burning coal and hang on to the bars of the grate.

Play, are moved quickly by the wind, or chimney draught.

293. Pendulous. Hanging.

294. Superstition. The abstract for the concrete, as often used.

Prophesying still. Which persists in prophesying. Prophesying is, of course, not used seriously.

295. Still deceived. Always or repeatedly mistaken in its forebodings.

Some stranger's, etc. These films were believed by old-fashioned and very superstitious people to indicate the approach of a stranger. The same prognostication was drawn from a bright spark of fire in the wick of a candle and from a coal starting or shooting out from the grate.

296. Understanding. Intellect.

297. Indolent. Is used in a modified and not a bad sense. It does not refer to the general habit but only to the fact that the mind is for the time at rest. It must be remembered that the original meaning of the word is free from pain.

Vacuity. Emptiness, rest.

298. Sleeps. Ceases from exertions.

299. Lethargic. Inactive, sluggish.

Mask. False or misleading expression of countenance.

300. Deep deliberation. Wrapt meditation. *As.* As if. *The man*, the subject, of our description.

301. Were tasked, etc. Were exerting his powers to their utmost.

Absorbed and lost. Wiapt in the most engrossing consideration.

302-332. *The poet's reverie broken by the howling wind outside, which by contrast, makes him enjoy the comforts of his fireside all the more. A winter evening's landscape. The change wrought by a night's fall of snow, and the appearance of the earth next morning.*

302. Lose. Spend idly

303. Freezing. There does not appear to be any particular force in this epithet, which is almost otiose, *i. e.*, without any function specially applicable to the passage where it is used. No doubt the blast is freezing, but that has nothing to do with its sweeping the shutter, or rousing up the dreamer. He is aroused by the *noise*, not by the frost or cold. The *roaring* blast would convey a close connection of cause and effect between the blast and the awakening of the man. He is snugly seated by the fire and is quite protected from the frost, but *not* from the noise of the wind.

304. Bolted shutter, see note to line 36.

Sweeps. Brushes furiously.

Summons home. Recalls (the senses) *sc.* because they have been wandering.

305. Recollected, *not* remembered, but gathered together. See note to 304, summons home.

Snapping short. At once breaking or destroying.

306. Glassy threads. Frail materials, like the thin threads that can be made when glass is melted. They are very fine, and very fragile.

Weaves. Fabricates, invents.

307. Brittle toils. Easily dispelled; easily broken dreams. The toils are the idle and trifling dreams described above in line 287, etc. Toils really are the nets spread to catch birds, and Cowper compares them to the quickly-aroused and quickly-dispersed images with which imagination captures the attention of a man in a reverie.

Restores me to myself. Makes me alive to present realities.

308. Recess. Retirement, shelter.

309. Abroad. Out of doors.

Endear. Heighten the enjoyment of.

310. Silence and warmth. Are opposed to the wind, and the frost respectively.

312. Variegated. Diversified in colour, as detailed in the next eight lines.

312-313. Meadows and lands are in the accusative in apposition to "show" The show consists of these.

Though faded. Though they had lost the brightness of spring

Waved is used as an appropriate word to express the movement of corn in the wind. Still it must be remembered that the point which the poet wishes to emphasize is *not* the movement but the colour of the corn. *Waved* being a picturesque and characteristic word suggests a more lively idea of a cornfield than the substantive verb would have done. In the same way Byron when he wishes to point to the colour of the sea, says "Blue *rolls* the ocean." Here the idea to be conveyed is again not motion but colour. "The ocean is blue" would have conveyed his meaning as clearly, but *rolls*, is more vivid.

Again, in the "Siege of Corinth," in describing the gathering of the Moslem forces, Byron says :—

"And there the Arab's camel kneels,
And there his steed the Tartar wheels."

This is only a poetical way of saying that Arabs and Tartars are among the forces

314. Golden. Yellow.

Mellow. Rich, soft.

315. Upturned. Because they have been upturned.

Forceful. Powerful.

Share. Ploughshare. Share is from Anglo-Saxon 'scerian,' to divide, cut. Share, a portion, is from the same word.

316. Fallows. Fields which have lain a year untilled. The word etymologically means *yellow* and the ground is named fallow from its colour, tawny, or pale-yellow. It is ordinarily ploughed though not sown or prepared for crops, and Cowper's *weedy fallows* must apparently have lain for some time without being even ploughed. *Fallow* is akin to Latin 'flavus,' yellow, and the same word is applied to a species of deer, from their colour.

Smile with verdure. Look gay or pleasing. In the Psalms the words *laugh and sing* are applied to valleys thick with corn.

Not unprofitable. Because, although they do not produce any of the usual crops, they afford pasturage for the flocks.

318. Selecting, sc. because the fallow fields produce weeds of different kinds.

Each his, etc Notice Cowper's correctness. A not uncommon mistake is to use the plural instead of the singular after

'each,' as, for instance, here it would be wrong to say each their fav'rite herb.

319. **Leafless**, because in the winter.

320. **Skirt**. Border.

Horizon. Imaginary boundary line, the furthest limit of one's sight; from Greek *horos*, a boundary.

Sable. Dark and gloomy.

321. **Scarce** noticed, etc. Not conspicuous because the evening was of a similar (kindred) gloomy shade.

322. Notice the emphasis obtained by the repetition of "change."

323. **Silently**, because snow makes no noise in falling.

Perform'd. Brought about.

324. **By most unfelt**, because they are under the shelter of their homes.

The face, etc. The whole aspect of things.

325. **Undergoes**. This is in the present progressive tense=*is undergoing*.

Fleecy. Soft as wool.

Flakes (Latin *flocus*, a lock of wool) are the separate, light particles of snow.

Downy. Soft as down, *i. e.*, the under-feathers of birds. The snow while falling resembles a shower of light feathers and children say, "They are feathering geese above."

327. **Lapse**. Fall. This, like many words used by Cowper, is an almost pedantic Latinism. The word is scarcely ever used in its physical sense, but rather in connection with abstractions, *e. g.* "a *lapse* from virtue."

329. **Assimilate all objects**. Make everything of a uniform colour.

330. **Gladly**. The earth is supposed to be pleased with the fall of snow because by it it is sheltered from the severest effects of the frost.

Thick'ning. Getting deeper and deeper as the snow shower continues.

331. **Blade**, *sc.* of grass.

Chilling. Nipping, withering.

332. **Escapes unhurt**. See note to "gladly," line 330.

Warm. The snow is not of course warm to the touch, but by lying several inches deep on the ground it affords a protection to the sprouting grass which it covers and shelters from the wind and the frost.

333-356 *A world full of troubles, or at least of but mingled happiness. It is well to realise one's own fortunate state by comparison with one less fortunate. Description of the waggoner and his horses, and the painful nature of his work in winter.*

333. Thorny. Full of troubles. A flowery path in life means a happy life. Shakespeare calls a happy careless life "the primrose path."

334. Unblighted. Unmixed with troubles. *Blight* is the name given to the hosts of tiny insects that attack fruit and flowers.

Or if found, etc. Or if it be found, finds it without, etc.

335. Thistly. Prickly, troublesome. The idea is perhaps taken from Genesis iii. 17, 18.—"Cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life, thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field."

At its side. Near it. This apparently must refer to the lot of a neighbour or acquaintance, for it seems to be admitted in line 334. **If found.** That happiness *may* be found unblighted.

336. The part of wisdom. A prudent measure.

Sin against, etc. Selfish transgression.

337. The law of love. We are told to love our neighbour as ourselves.

To measure. To compare: "to measure" is in apposition to "the part of wisdom." See note on line 308.

338. Less distinguished, sc. by God's mercy, less fortunate.

339. Moderate. Tolerable, bearable. The word means literally "limited" (Lat. *modus* = a measure).

340. Suffering more. Who suffer more than we do.

341. Ill fares the traveller. The traveller is in a bad condition. Fare, first of all means, to travel, then to be in any state good or bad. A. S. *faran* = to go.

Stalks. Strides, takes long steps.

342. Ponderous. Heavy, especially with heavy and thick soles to keep out the moisture.

Reeking. Steaming, *sc.* with exertion. In the cold weather, the sweat of the horse rises in vapour, like breath.

Team. Two or more horses harnessed to a vehicle.

343. Wain. A wagon; another form of the same word.

Heavily. With difficulty.

Impeded sore. Badly or grievously hindered.

344. Congregated loads. The snow which gathers round the wheels and being pressed and caked by their weight as they revolve become fixed on the tires.

345. **Clogged.** Loaded, hindered, especially with some sticky substance.

In its sluggish pace. As it moves slowly along.

346. **Noiseless.** Because the snow has fallen thick on the ground and like a very soft and thick carpet prevents all sound from being heard.

Appears, etc. The wagon is piled with its load, and has perhaps a cover over it. This is covered with snow, so as at a distance to present the appearance of a mass of snow.

347. **Toiling.** Means more than simply engaged in work. It means labouring hard, struggling with their task. This, of course, is all the harder on account of the condition of the roads, the clogg'd wheels, etc.

Expand the nostril. Breathe hard in their efforts to haul the wagon along.

Nostril is from nose, and Anglo-Saxon *thyrol*, hole, aperture. Drill, or pierce, or bore, a hole, is from the same word.

Forced downward. The horses breathe so hard that the breath descends, falling on their chests which for the same reason are thrust forward (jutting). It is there quickly frozen, *consolidated*. An old doctor who had been in an Arctic expedition remarked that the breath froze and falling in this consolidated form, "rattled on the deck."

350. **He.** The waggoner.

Form'd to bear. Constitutionally vigorous enough to bear.

351. **The pelting brunt.** The violence of the lashing storm. To pelt is to lash or drive with blows, *e.g.*, to pelt one with stones or other missiles. The frozen snow driven by the wind stings his face with blows.

Brunt. Onset, attack.

352. **Half-shut.** To protect himself against the driven snow.

Puckered. Wrinkled, from *poke*, a pocket or bag. The dashing of the storm in his face makes him grin and wrinkle up his cheeks.

353. **Presented bare, sc.** because the lips are drawn away instinctively from the teeth, as he shrinks from presenting his face to the storm.

Plods. Trudges with difficulty.

354. **Secures his hat, sc.** which would otherwise be blown off by the wind.

With both. He has sometimes to use both hands to wield his long whip.

355. His pliant length of whip. His long and flexible whip.

356. Resounding, etc. Which he often cracks and which has always the desired effect of stimulating the horses.

357-373. *Yet the waggoner also fortunate, in that his strong body easily resists merely physical discomfort. He has no domestic troubles, his horse being his only care. Let us hope he treats it well!*

357. In my account. In my estimation.

Denied, inasmuch as you are denied.

358. Sensibility of pain. Sensitiveness to pain. It may be remembered that sensibility of pain is usually attended by sensibility of pleasure in proportion, so that the correctness of Cowper's view may be doubted.

359. Refinement. Refined people.

Thrice. Not to be taken literally, but—in an eminent degree.

Mr. Storr refers to Mill's Utilitarianism with reference to this passage.

Mill says: "Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference that is the more desirable pleasure."

"Now it is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties." The question cannot be discussed here, but it seems to be by no means settled.

360. Indeed introduces a concession. I admit that it feels, etc. See line 255, *not worn indeed*.

361. Piercing. Sharp, searching.

Unimpaired. Without being any the worse for it. Impair, is from low Latin *pejorare*, to make worse.

362. The learned finger. The finger of the learned physician.

Explore. Test the various organs of the body.

363. Unhealthful East: "A wind from the East,
Suits not man or beast." (Old proverb.)

364. Breathes. Carries on its breath.

Spleen. Ill-humour and uncomfortable condition of mind and body; the word also frequently means "melancholy." The spleen was supposed to be the seat of ill-humour, or possibly as in

the case of the liver, a disordered condition of the spleen brings on ill-humour, etc. In both cases, liver, and spleen, have come to be used to designate the disorders and not the organs.

Searches. Penetrates, tries the condition of. In old medical terminology, "search" meant "to probe," i. e., to pierce the flesh with a view to finding the condition of a certain organ. Cf. Shakespeare's "searching of a wound." *As You Like It* III., ii. See note on 'piercing,' line 361.

365. The infirm. The weakly or unsound.

Is wholesome air, etc. Agrees with your constitution.

366. Roll on. Follow one another.

Exempt, etc. Free from domestic worries. The waggoner must be supposed to be a bachelor, but this does not appear to be necessarily always the case.

367. Thy waggon is thy wife. Your waggon demands that care and attention which married men usually bestow on their wives.

368. The dull companion. The waggon which, as compared with a living companion (a wife), is dull and uninteresting.

369. Thine helpless charge. The poor beasts (horses) are the objects of thy care and depend on thee for food, etc. Perhaps as the waggon is said to supply the place of a wife, the horses may occupy the place of children in regard of their being a "helpless charge."

370. Treat them kindly. In many of Cowper's letters we find expression of his very kindly feelings towards dumb animals—a somewhat rare feeling in his day.

Rude. Rough, uncultivated. "Rude as thou appear'st" is an adverbial sentence of concession,=although thou appearest rude.

371. Mercy here means, compassion for dumb animals.

The great. This somewhat old fashioned expression means people of rank and wealth, not necessarily *great* in the true sense of the term. A Lord or a Duke may be great in the sense used by Cowper, though he may yet be and frequently is the biggest fool.

372. With needless hurry. Who drive at an unnecessarily fast rate, and distress their horses.

373. As they would seem. As they would like to appear or be thought.

Not always show. It would be more usual English if 'do' were inserted before 'not.'

374-390. *A bitter winter night rouses compassion for the poor. Their pains and discomforts when the day's labour is over. Description of a poor cottage interior, with the vain efforts of the family to keep warm.*

374. **Poor, yet industrious, etc.** These adjectives, characteristic of the poor family Cowper is going to describe, are in a kind of pendent construction, the whole of them being summed up in the adjective such. They are not, apparently, the waggoner's family, as suggested by Mr. Storr, for the waggoner has been described as unmarried.

375. **Claim.** Deserve, are entitled to.

376. **And have.** All people who are capable of feeling for their fellow creatures, are touched with pity for them.

377. **While it lasts.** *It*, is *labour*, the noun being anticipated by the pronoun.

378. **Brave the season.** They defy the inclement weather.

379. **Ill clad etc.** This clause shows the reason why they are cold at night, *sc.* because their food and clothing are insufficient.

Time to cool. In the day time, their work is so pressing, that they have no time to rest and get cool. Only in the evening, when their work is over, can they do so, and then, as they have no work to warm them, they feel the cold bitterly.

380. **Frugal.** Careful not to waste anything.

Trembles. Perhaps not only from cold but from nervous anxiety as to how long the fuel will last. It should be remembered by Indian boys that the *cold* is one of the greatest pains of poverty in England. Want of fire is felt almost as much as want of food. In this respect the English poor suffer from a source unknown almost to the poor, at any rate, of India.

381. **Brushwood.** She cannot afford logs, and is therefore obliged to use such worthless twigs (brushwood) as she can gather. Goldsmith's "Wretched matron" is forced "to pick her wintry faggot from the thorn."—*Deserted Village*, line 133.

Blazing clear. The brushwood is thin insubstantial stuff that flares up easily but is soon extinguished.

382. **Like all terrestrial joys.** Cowper does not fail to draw a moral wherever he can, perhaps unnecessarily sometimes. Here the brushwood which blazes clear, but soon dies, suggests a contrast with a better kind of fuel, logs, coal, etc., which does not blaze quickly, and does not, as compared with the brushwood, die soon. This kind of fire is, however, also a "terrestrial joy."

Terrestrial. Belonging to the earth. (Lat. *terrestri* = *earthly*.)

383. Embers. Hot ashes.

Nurses. Fosters, takes care of, so that they may not be extinguished.

385. Crowded, because the children all press together to get a share of the fire, or the word may refer to the crowding or pressing of each child's body, his knees being huddled up against his chin as he sits before the warmth.

Cow'ring. Crouching.

Sparks is used to shew what a small remnant of fire is left.

386. Retires. Draws back from the fire.

To quake. To shiver with cold.

So. Provided that. See line 149.

387. As. Inasmuch as he is. As, here introduces a fact. In line 300, 'as the man,' etc., as, introduces an apparent but *not actua* state of matters.

More inured. Ure is an old word for use. "For if you observe the words well, it is no other method than that which brute beasts do put in ure."—Bacon's Advancement of Learning, Book II., XIII., 2. 'Inured' means 'used to.'

388. Current in his veins, etc. His blood circulates more vigorously.

390. Finds his own distress, etc. Is wretched, because his family are wretched.

391-406. *The frugal, unsatisfying evening meal of the poor; their thrift, which avails them little. All they have is mutual affection.*

391. The taper. This is a tallow dip. A taper is a kind of candle which diminishes in size towards the end. It may be of wax or other material. The adjective 'taper,' which conveys the same idea, is said to be taken from the noun. The poor family who are being described could not possibly afford wax-tapers, so the word here means a tallow-candle which is made by dipping a doubled wick into melted grease. This wick when covered with grease is allowed to cool, and then dipped again, the process being repeated till the dip (candle) is of the required size. As the grease naturally flows to the lower end of the wick, that end is thicker than the other, and this gives the candle its taper-form. As the wick is doubled, and an inch or so left undipped, this forms a loop by which the dip may be "dangled along at the cold finger's end", the finger being inserted in the loop. Candles of this kind are commonly made in the country

for the use of servants in middle-class families. The construction in "the taper soon extinguish'd," etc., is absolute.

Dangled. Loosely hung so as to swing about.

393. Just when the day, etc. About sunset.

Brown, &c. because made from coarse flour. In some parts of the country barley bread is used, which is almost black.

394. Lodged. Placed away till again required.

Half-eaten. Half the loaf is consumed.

Sauce is from Latin 'salsus,' salt. It means usually some kind of condiment which adds a zest or relish to food. Here the 'sauce' is anything eaten with bread, Latin *opsomum*. Mr. Storr quotes the Scotch word *kitchen*, which Scott, in a note to the "Pirate," Chap. XI., defines as "what is eaten by way of relish to dry bread, as cheese, dried fish, or the like relishing morsels."

395. Savoury. (Latin *sapor*, taste and smell.) Pleasing to the nose and palate.

396. Sleep seems, etc. There is nothing to do but to sleep.

397. Penury. Want, extreme poverty.

The thought is chain'd. The mind is prevented from exercising itself, being confined to the one idea of food and other necessities.

398. And sweet, etc. There is but little conversation.

399. Notwithstanding all their care, they do not prosper. A man may thrive well, or thrive ill, but if the word be used without a qualifying adverb, it is taken in the sense of *prosper*.

Ingenious parsimony. Economical expedients, means of frugality.

400. But just. Barely.

401. Inventory is a list of articles, here used for the articles themselves.

Stool. A seat without any back.

402. Skillet is a kind of cooking vessel. In some parts of the country, however, the term is applied to a high-backed bench ordinarily known as a settle, sometimes also called a *skew*.

403. They live. This mere statement means to convey that they just manage to exist, though without the joys and pleasures that make life really full and enjoyable.

Extorted. Wrung with difficulty, and by importunity.

Alms like *riches* is a singular form, A. S. *ælmesse*.

404. Hands is put for persons, by the figure synecdoche.

Other boast have none. Can say no more for themselves in respect of their condition in life than that they barely contrive to keep out of debt.

405. Honest pride is self-respect.

406. Mutual This word is not infrequently wrongly used. Here it is right, for the love is given and repaid between two people. There is a process of reciprocity. But the expression 'mutual friend' to signify a third person who is a *common* friend of two parties is absolutely incorrect.

407-428. The poet's admiration for the poor but virtuous couple. Contrast between them and lazy, importunate beggary. The evils of the system of relief. Yet there is hope for them also, when their growing family is able to work and support the parents. Charity to be extended to them.

407. Praise. Esteem or value highly, respect.

408. Ye are worthy. 'Worthy' is not used absolutely but =worthy of praise.

409. Dry. Without butter or other *sauce*

Independent crust. This is an instance of metonymy. An independent crust is a crust eaten by independent people.

410. With a sigh. With sad and melancholy surroundings.

411. Rugged. Rough, harsh.

Insolent rebuffs. Contemptuous rejection "that patient merit of the unworthy takes." Hamlet, III., i.

412. Knaves in office. Rascally officials, *i.e.*, the relieving officers, the officials appointed to enquire into and relieve cases of poverty from the public funds.

Partial. Unfair; not distributing relief according to the deserts of the individual, but according to his own likes and dislikes.

413. Distribution, *sc.* of relief.

414. Importunity. Importunate people.

Liberal of their aid, etc. Readily assisting those who noisily demand relief, and by their tattered dress endeavour to extort compassion.

415. Deaf to. Refusing to consider the application of.

Who would blush, etc. These are the decent poor who endeavour to maintain as respectable an appearance as their wretched means will allow.

417. Whom famine, etc. Who though half starved endeavour to be clean.

418. Painful shyness. The shyness arises from a sense of shame at their position of suppliants for relief. Painful may refer to the suppliants themselves or to the sympathising stander-by.

419. Because deserving. The ground of the refusal is the decent appearance of the applicants which would seem to argue a condition above actual want. This, however, ought to entitle them all the more to relief as it arises from their endeavours to be independent and self-respecting.

Silently. Without grumbling. The above would seem to point not so much to knavery and partiality on the part of the relieving officers as to a want of discerning power, and inability to distinguish who are most deserving.

420. Time, etc. Time will bring a remedy.

421. Increase, sc. of your family This, he tries to show, will be a blessing.

422. Well trained. Well instructed how to earn their own living.

423. Helpless, sc. because as yet too young to work.

Find their hands, etc. Shall acquire the necessary skill and strength and employment on which to exercise them. It is not easy to see that this would improve matters much. Each of these young ones in his turn will have to provide for his own wants and those of his own family.

425. Conscious. Introduces the reason for giving help. We will help you because we are conscious, etc.

426. A wealthier than ourselves. "Mr. Smith, a rich banker, afterwards created Lord Carrington."—Storr. Cowper, in a letter to Unwin, says: "Olney has not had such a friend this many a day; nor has there been an instance at any time of a few poor families so effectually relieved, or so completely encouraged to the pursuit of honest industry." From this and other passages it seems probable that when describing the poor couple above Cowper had a particular family in his mind.

428. Denies them, etc. There are several references in the letters to Mr. Smith's unwillingness to have his name known by those whom he helped.

429-465. Human misery generally due to man himself, brought on by idleness or drink. Description of the nocturnal robber and his doings. His thefts accomplished, not to provide for a starving family, but to obtain drink for himself. The appropriate punishment for men who neglect their family.

429. Whimper. Whine, moan feebly.

430. Long, *sc.* in the telling, protracted and tedious to listen to. Self-inflicted. Their troubles arise from their own faults.

431. Sottish. Drunken

432. Prowling, is commonly used of animals of prey, wolves, tigers, etc.

433. Much solicitous. Taking great pains to discover.

434. Compensate for a day of sloth, etc. There is a double idea here. He is idle by day, but makes up for it by his activity by night. He also earns nothing in the day-time, and must to compensate for this collect plunder at night. Compensate is accented on the second syllable. The tendency of modern English is to throw the accent back.

435. Darkness. His works are works of darkness in the sense of being done at night, and also of being evil works which in scripture are called 'works of darkness.'

Nocturnal. The Latin equivalent (*nox, noctis*=night) of the *nightly* of line 432.

436. Pale. Enclosure. (Latin *palus*, a stake.) That portion of Ireland round Dublin in which English law was recognized was called the Pale, it being considered as staked off or enclosed from the rest of Ireland.

Hedge. A thorn fence is meant.

437. Flashing. It appears that this may be done by binding the branches of the thorns together, or by partially cutting some of them which are then intertwined with the unbroken branches. The whole is fastened to stakes driven into the bank from which the hedge grows, so as to make an efficient and practically solid fence. This is confined to certain districts, and is sometimes called "laying."

438. Loamy. Loam is defined as 'a natural mixture of clay, sand, and lime, with animal and vegetable matter.' It is to be noticed that 'hedge' bears a different signification in different counties. In some districts a hedge is a bank made of alternate layers of turf and stones.

Uptorn qualifies *spoil*. The thief pulls up the stakes, to be used as fire-wood.

439. He is strong and active enough where there is mischief to be done, but altogether refuses to work for any good.

Lame. Impotent, helpless. *Resistless* and *lame* both qualify *strength*

440. To. In the direction of.

Spoil. I. e., the stakes.

441. *An ass's burden.* As much as an ass can carry. It does not appear that the thief brings an ass to carry the wood, for he is himself said to be laden.

When laden, etc. When he has gathered as much as he can carry.

442. *Steals away.* Steps off, moves off noiselessly.

443. *The boarded hovel.* Hut made of wood, in which firewood is kept.

444. *Well-stack'd.* Neatly and regularly arranged.

Riven logs, etc. Tree trunks split into short logs to be used as fuel.

445. *Pernicious.* Mischievous.

Nor will he leave, etc. He is sure, when opportunity offers, to force open the door of the fowl-house.

447. *Where chanticleer, etc.* Where the cock and hens sleep. Chanticleer gets his name from the *clear* or loud way in which he *chants* or sings. The word is from the old French *chaunte-clair*, an epithet applied to the cock in fables.

His harem. The hens.

448. *Unsuspecting group.* The cock is lord of his family. The *pomp* or splendour consists in the number of his retinue. Unsuspecting is used because the bird has no idea of the approaching danger.

Twitch'd. Plucked.

Perch. The horizontal sticks or ledges where the fowls sit or sleep.

449. *He.* The thief.

Princely. See note on line 448.

450. *Voracious.* All-devouring, capacious.

451. *Loudly wondering* Expressing his terror and astonishment by loud cries.

The above description is half humorous, half sympathetic. Cowper's observation of and sympathy with animals pervades the whole poem. For a description, somewhat in the same vein as this of the unfortunate cock, see "Winter Morning Walk," line 27.

"——— Resigned.

To sad necessity, the cock foregoes
His wonted strut, and, wading at their head,
With well-considered steps, seems to resent
His alter'd gait and stateliness retrenched."

452. *Nor this, etc.* The thief does not do all this to support his family, but to procure drink for himself.

453. Did pity, etc. If he were tempted to steal by pity for his starving family.

Warp. Twist, turn aside, as wood is twisted out of shape by the sun or damp.

454. Principle. Sense of right.

455. For their support, so destitute. *I.e.*, for the support of them, so destitute. For this construction, see note, l. 8.

456. Pine. Languish from want of food.

Themselves is to be taken with *made his victims*. So far is the thief from robbing to support his family that they as well as others are the victims of his love of drink, for the money that should go to buy food and clothing for them is spent in drink. Thus he robs both his own family and other people.

As. Inasmuch as they are. Compare line 387, as more inured.

457. Exposed, *sc.* to his brutality.

Scruple. The Latin '*scrupulus*' means a sharp pebble; then the smallest division of weight; then uneasiness, anxiety, doubt, scruple.

458. Defenceless Perhaps oftener applied to persons than, as here, to things.

The wretched family, rather than their poor chattels, are defenceless.

The idea is that the husband and father can sell the miserable furniture, if he chooses, for drink.

459. Cruel is. Arises from a cruel motive and an unfeeling heart.

Quenchless. Never satisfied.

460. Ebriety. Drunkenness (Lat. *ebrietas*).

Prompts. Suggests, urges.

461. Imbrutes, etc. Makes a beast of him.

462. Oh for. Would that we had.

To noose, etc. To hang him. Cowper's exclamation seems justified when we consider the very trivial offences against property that in the 18th century were punishable with death, while offences against the person, such as child-neglect, went comparatively unpunished.

463. His own. His family.

The blood he gave them, etc. His own flesh and blood, *i. e.*, progeny.

464. Hates. Appears to be a strong word. He is absolutely indifferent rather than filled with active dislike.

465. Sworn to love. Part of the oath taken by the bridegroom in the English marriage-service is "to love, honour, and cherish."

466-486. *The evils of drink in England, especially among the poorer classes. Description of a typical pot-house scene, with its angry discussions and discords.*

466. City. In England means a corporate town which is or has been the seat of a bishop, a cathedral town.

467. Hamlet. Anglo-Saxon *ham*, home, house. The *let* is, of course, the diminutive

Merry. Is probably sarcastically used. We call it Merry England, but here's the reality. The word merry is often applied to England, and to the inhabitants in the sense of active, brisk, etc.

468. Though lean and beggared. However poor and wretched the inhabitants are. Lean and beggared probably qualify *land*.

Every twentieth pace, etc. At every twenty yards there is a public house.

469 Unguarded. Unsuspecting, not anticipating such a smell.

Whiff. Puff, sudden gust of air carrying the smell described.

470. Stale debauch. The smells of smoke, drink, etc., from a room in which there is no ventilation.

470. Debauch. Intemperance.

Styes. Properly pens for pigs, here foul dens of drunkenness.

471. That law has licensed. The inference is that the *law* should not countenance such places. *License*, is the regular term for the purchased permission to sell 'ale and tobacco, and likewise spirituous liquors.'

471. As makes, etc. As shocks and sickens a sober man. Perhaps no stench is more horrible than that of a crowded room where drinking has been going on some time, to a perfectly sober and clean-mouthed man.

472. Involved. Wrapped, in the pure Latin meaning of the word.

Lost. May mean that he can scarcely be seen for the smoke, and also that his senses are lost in the fumes.

473. Indian. American, or West Indian, for Cowper knew nothing of Trichinopoly cheroots.

Guzzling. Swilling, drinking unnecessarily.

The boor, etc. This represents the 'company' assembled at the public house. Boor, Anglo-Saxon 'gebûr,' means simply, countryman, but like 'churl' and other words, it has deteriorated in meaning, till, as used in the text, it signifies a rude uncultivated fellow.

474. Lackey. A footman, the "powdered, pert proficient in the art of sounding an alarm" of line 145, who condescends to 'use' the public house in the evening.

Groom. One who has charge of horses. The Anglo-Saxon 'guma' is man, and we retain the meaning in *bridegroom*.

Craftsman. Artizan, mechanic.

475. Takes a Lethæan leave of. Completely forgets. Lethe, is the Greek for forgetfulness, and the word is sometimes used as the name of more than one place in the lower regions. But there does not appear to have been any *river*, of the name, as sometimes supposed.

Toil. This word, connected with 'tills,' must be carefully distinguished from, the toils, or net (Latin *tela*, web or loom). Compare Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village,' 239.

"Obscure it (the public house) sinks, nor shall it more impart

An hour's importance to the poor man's heart.

Thither no more the peasant shall repair

To sweet oblivion of his daily care," etc.

Cowper is speaking of drunkenness, but it is probable that he would altogether object to public houses. Goldsmith's view is far more indulgent.

476. Joiner. One who makes furniture, whereas the carpenter supplies the fixed woodwork of a building.

He that plies (*uses*), the tailor.

477. He that kneads, the baker.

Loud alike, equally vociferous from the effect of drink.

478. Learned. Every man thinks he knows better than any one else.

479. Plaintive, with a wailing, melancholy noise.

480. Wasted tones, because nobody listens to it.

Harmony, rather, melody, for, harmony implies the concord of several sounds. Melody is a single strain, so is that of the fiddle.

481. Whatever the subject of their discourse, they are pretty sure to lose their tempers over it.

She. Anticipatory of 'Fell Discord.' The name of Discord is emphasized by the introduction of the personal pronoun before her name, as though the poet were pointing to her.

482. **Arbitress.** She who decides.

483. **Perch'd on the sign-post.** Discord has a permanent and suitable seat on the sign-post of the beer-house.

Holds, etc. Keeps the debate from being concluded or settled.

Even. Which do not incline to one side or the other, so that the debate is kept up.

484. **Undecisive.** Unsettled, wavering. *Indecisive*, is the more usual form. 'In' is usually prefixed to words derived directly or indirectly from the Latin, while 'un,' may be attached to almost any adjective

Scales. This word is connected with *shell*, and is altogether different from *scale*, a ladder, marked measure, etc., which is from, Latin *scando*, to climb.

485. **A weight of ignorance, etc.** The ignorance of one disputant is counterbalanced by the pride of the other.

486. **Smiles.** Discord smiles through pleasure because the dispute is prolonged.

Eternal, because the dispute will never end.

487-512. *The profanity of the pot-house, which is the rustic training-ground in strong language. Drink the cause of the countryman's downfall. Yet apparently of use, in that it fills the government exchequer. Exhortation to the lower classes to drink their fill, since then the taxes will be swelled.*

487. **Curse.** A curse is properly an imprecation, or invoking of evil.

An oath is an invocation of the deity in witness of a statement, but the two words are sometimes used indifferently for bad language generally

Twin. Nearly allied, kindred.

488. **Cheek-distending.** Mouth-filling. We speak, too, of a full round oath.

Not to be praised. This is sarcastic. Gentlemen may swear to add force to what they say, but in the mouth of the poor man an oath is disgraceful.

Nobody, perhaps, ever supposed that swearing was really ornamental, etc., but there is no doubt that in Cowper's time the habit was very general. Mr. Storr mentions Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor, who was notorious for his bad language.

490. **Senators.** Lords, and members of the House of Commons

491. In the case of gentlemen of rank we must not call it *swearing*. It is *rhetoric*.

For fame, to gain celebrity for their oratorical powers

492. The schools are, apparently, the public houses.

Plebeian, of low class. Lat. *Plebs*, the common people.

493. Simple. Innocent, unsophisticated.

Initiated. Instructed.

Arts, sc. the use of bad language.

494. Some, the Senators referred to above, line 490.

With politer grace, less coarsely.

495. But none, etc. They pick up the use of bad language as readily as their betters.

Here, in the public houses.

496. Competence. Sufficiency of necessities.

497. Rapine. Theft, as described above; though *rapine* is a somewhat dignified word for fowl-stealing. It is usually applied to theft on a large scale, such as the sacking of a town.

498. Grown weary, etc. Becoming impatient of their misbehaviour.

Shakes her encumbered lap, etc. Gets rid of them by condemning them to hard labour, or transportation, which was for many years the punishment for vagabondage or "sturdy beggary."

499. Encumbered. Burdened, clogged.

500. Censure, originally estimation, opinion, but now used in a bad sense, blame, disapproval. The Latin, *censeo* was used in the former sense.

501. Advertise. Call attention to. (Lat *ad-vertere*=to turn towards.)

Pest. Nuisance, plague. (Latin *pestis*=the plague.)

502. The filth, etc. Manure.

Feeds. Supplies.

503. Stinks, etc. There is really an adversative notion suggested here. The filth, etc., is useful, *though* it stinks. In other words, the licensing of public houses, though scandalous, is profitable.

504. Excise is an indirect tax on the consumer. For instance, a man pays, we will say, sixpence to the keeper of a public house for a glass of spirits, which might under certain conditions be procured for two pence. The reason it costs so much is that the distiller and the retail seller have to pay for the privilege of producing and selling it, and must reimburse themselves proportionately. The expense of this falls eventually on the consumer, who pays so heavily before he can procure his glass of spirits.

Fatten'd. Enriched.

Rich result. Large profit.

505. Ten thousand is used indefinitely of any large number.

506. Dribbling. Giving out in drops. The word is appropriately used of spirituous liquors which are drawn off in small quantities at a time.

Base. Vile.

507. Touch'd, etc. Operated on by the intervention of Government which converts the liquor into gold.

Midas, King of Phrygia, was granted by the gods the privilege of changing everything which he touched into gold, but as his food as well as other things was so changed, he begged that they would withdraw their gift. He was ordered to bathe in the river Pactolus, which ever after ran gold.

508. Bleed gold. Pour out their contents which produce much wealth to Government.

Ministers. Those at the head of political affairs. It is not insinuated that these Ministers appropriate the profits of the spirit duty to themselves, but that they spend the money lavishly on the public service, wars, etc.

509. Drink, etc. This is a sarcastic appeal to the frequenters of the public houses. "The more you drink, my friends, the better, for a proportionately greater income will accrue to Government." Mr. Storr seems to take the words as implying that Government encourages drunkenness by taxing spirituous drinks, but they do not seem necessarily to mean this. "'Tis your country bids," may mean simply "your country is in need of your contributions in the shape of tax on drink, and it is true patriotism to get drunk, for the more you drink, the more you benefit your country."

511. Th' assistance of your throats, *sc.* in guzzling liquor.

512. You have all of you got the capacity of putting away drink, and this is the only service required of you. Of course these last four lines are highly sarcastic.

513-552. *Oh for the golden age sung by the poets! Yet such an age never existed; it was merely evolved from the poet's fancy! Contrast between the so-called pastoral golden age, and the present. A typical dairy-maid of to-day described.*

513. Would I had fall'n upon. Would that my lot had been cast in. In the same way Milton writes of having "fall'n upon evil days."

Those happier days. Perhaps the Golden age of Hesiod, as well as the simple life of Virgil's *Bucolics*. Maro is Virgil whose name was Publius Vergilius Maro.

514. Arcadian. Arcadia was a picturesque district in the centre of the Peloponnesus.

515. Sidney. Sir Philip Sidney (*temp.* Elizabeth), nephew of the Earl of Leicester, wrote the "Arcadia," a pastoral romance, to please "my dear Lady and Sister, the Countess of Pembroke."

Poetic prose. "It (the "Arcadia") is a poem in prose, which is as much as to say, in other words, that it unites the faults of both kinds."—Saintsbury.

516. Nymphs. This is an old fashioned name for young women. See note, l. 21.

Dianas. Chaste as Diana. Diana, among other offices, was goddess of chastity.

Swains. Another old fashioned word, the correlative of Nymph. See note, l. 21.

517. Felt. Appreciated.

518. Innocence, etc. Innocence was incompatible with the life of courts and only found a congenial home among rural scenes (the Groves). A frequent theme of poetry in the 16th and the 17th century is the search for happiness, virtue, and innocence. The seeker fails to find them in the city, the court, the church, and at last finds them in the simple life of the groves and the fields.

It seems. If we are to believe what we read about all this.

It should be noticed that the poet in describing these old days adopts suitable expressions, nymphs, swains, groves, etc., being characteristic of the pastoral school of writers, such as Sidney in the Arcadia, or Spenser in the *Shepherd's Calendar*.

520. The footsteps, etc. There were still some vestiges of simple manners extant.

Simplicity is here personified as a maiden walking on the meadows. In the pastoral world, there are still some traces of simplicity, for time had not yet effaced her footsteps.

521. (So they sing). This is said with a humorous affectation of caution. "You know I don't say all this, but this is what has been said and written."

522. Profane. Latin *profanus*, first of all means, outside the temple, not dedicated to deity, then wicked, impious. Compare *lewd*, which in its primary signification is *lay*, belonging to the laity, unclerical, then, licentious, profligate, etc.

523. Profligate. Abandoned, vicious.

524. Observed. Noticed (*i. e.*, on the rare occasions when they were found).

Prodigies. Wonders, monstrosities. *Prodigy* (Latin *prodigium*) is from root *dic*, or *dig*, of Latin *digitus*, finger, and means that which points to or warns us of a coming event. In the same way monster (*monstrum*) is from *moneo*, to warn, and has a similar meaning to that of *prodigium*.

Reclaim'd. Called back, converted to good ways, applied properly to manners, and by a kind of zeugma, to speech.

525. Vain wish. This is the wish expressed in line 513—"Would I had fall'n," etc.

Those days were never. The men of those ages have considered previous ages as superior to their own, but upon mature thought it seems impossible that there was ever a golden age of perfect happiness.

Airy dreams. Unreal conceptions.

526. Sat for the picture. Were the origin of the idea. It is necessary to follow closely the comparison here. The poet's "airy dreams" are compared to a man sitting to an artist for his portrait. The poet's imagination has formed a picture quite unlike the truth, just as the painter's brush may produce a portrait which cannot be recognized as a likeness of the sitter. Thus the poet's description is a "gay delirium," in which the real details of past ages are obscured, just as the painter may obscure the real features of the man whose portrait he paints.

527. Imparting substance, etc. Lending a false air of reality to what never existed.

"——— as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen

Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name."—*Midsummer Night's*

Dream, V., I.

528. A gay delirium. A pleasing delusion. In the same way Sismondi says that chivalry is an ideal world such as it existed in the imagination of the Romance writers. "The more closely we look into history, the more clearly shall we perceive that the system of chivalry is an invention almost entirely poetical."

529. Grant it. Even if this be the case. *Grant* is subjunctive—if we grant it.

Age. Time, period of the world.

530. That favour'd, etc. In Which such a notion was possible.

531. Impossible. Which would be impossible in these our own times.

532. To suppose. The bare idea or conception of.

Where she presides. Under her influence.

533. Tramontane. Living beyond the mountains, and therefore strange.

Stumbles is usually intransitive, but is here used transitively=cause to stumble. Cowper probably had in his mind the *scandalon* or stumbling block, cause of error or offence. The belief in the possibility of such a scene in the present day is a stumbling block which it is impossible to get over.

534. No. Oh dear no! we are not so simple. We are polished, you must know. The word "polished" is, of course, used sarcastically.

The rural lass. Country girl.

536. Artless. Unsophisticated, unaffected, natural.

537. Dignified. Worthily became, lent a grace to, adorned.

She was hardly less than. She almost equalled.

538. Fair shepherdess Arcadian described in line 517, etc. Nymphs were Dianas, etc.

Romance originally meant a tale written in the Romance language, i. e., a mixture of Latin with the language of the barbarous nations who overthrew Rome, then any tale of extravagant adventures, etc.

539. Is seen no more. Is a thing of the past.

The character is lost. There are none such left.

540. Her head, etc. The construction is absolute.

Lappet. A border of lace or silk.

Aloft. On her head or bonnet.

541. Ribands. The modern ribbons.

Gay. Adverb

Superbly. Loftily. In the real meaning of Lat. *superbus* = raised aloft, from *super*=above.

Raised, etc. Artificially increased in height and size. This refers to the huge head-dresses or *commodes*, as they were called, which came in in the 18th century. Addison ridicules them in the "Spectator," and there is frequent reference to them in Thackeray's "Esmond." "The commode originated in the Court of Louis XIV., being introduced by Mademoiselle Fontange."—Ashton's "Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne."

543. Smart. Skilful, quick; or the word may be taken as an example of metonymy, *smart* being transferred from the wig to the wig-maker.

Wig is a shortened form of, periwig. Periwig and peruke are the same word, the latter being French, the former Dutch. In

'periwig' the *i*, after *r*, is corruptly inserted. The form periwig gave rise to a notion that 'peri' was a prefix like Greek *peri*. Hence it was dropt, the resulting form being 'wig.'—Skeat. With the shortened form 'wig,' may be compared 'bus' for omnibus, 'story' for history, etc. More often the latter part of the word is lost, as mole, from moldiwarp, tick, in the sense of credit, from ticket.

544. *Sustains*. Holds up.

545. *Ruffled*. Adorned with ruffles, *i.e.*, plaited cambric or other soft material, frills. When a similar ornament is worn about the neck, as in the pictures of Queen Elizabeth, it is called a *ruff*.

Tottering. Because the heels of her shoes are too high, and her gait is therefore unnatural. Women sometimes wore patens, a kind of clog raised from the ground into which the foot was thrust, shoe and all.

546. *Ill-propped*. Supported awkwardly or with difficulty.

French. Made after the French fashion. In the days of Louis XIV of France, the heels of shoes, both for men and women, became ridiculously high, sometimes four or five inches. Even now, the high heels of ladies' shoes are called "Louis heels."

547. *But that*, etc. Were it not that the basket hanging from her arm shows she is a country girl. The basket contains the produce of the farm, eggs, butter, etc. which is for sale.

549. *Dairy work*, *i.e.*, churning, etc., converting milk into butter and cheese. The room where the milk is kept for this purpose is called a dairy. The old word *dey* or *day* meant 'milk,' and in Scotland a dairy maid is called a *dey-woman*.

550. If things go on at this rate we may next expect to see her attended by a servant to carry her basket.

Foot-boy. Really, a servant who attends his master or mistress on foot, though the term, like *footman*, has become extended to the meaning shown in note to l. 145.

551. *No longer blushing*, etc. This, of course, does not mean that the young woman's nature is changed and that she is no longer ashamed of what she formerly blushed for, but that she has got rid of her basket and therefore no longer has it to be ashamed of.

Awkward. Inconvenient and disagreeable to carry because it stamped her as a country girl as which she was ashamed to be recognized.

552-612. *Corruption of the country brought about by town manners. The former condition of the country, its simplicity and honesty. Its present insecurity for both person and property, both by day and night. The world at large also deteriorating, through power and*

wealth, the evils of which spread downwards. The corruption of the great landholders, and its effects. The clergy also affected. Description of the vicious parson, and the evils he gives sanction to.

552 Train is a portion of a lady's gown which trails or is dragged behind the wearer, being made unnecessarily long. See note, l. 247. Great ladies have trainbearers to support their train. The idea in the text is purposely exaggerated as no one would be so foolish as to go to market with a train behind her.

Umbrella. Umbrellas were for a long time carried only by women.

553. Tinged. Stained, contaminated. Cowper's preference of the country to the town is natural to a shy recluse who shrank from general society.

"God made the country, and man made the town."—*Sofa*, 749.

If Cowper had not profited by the town his life in the country would not have been very endurable. What would have become of his tea, his newspaper and other comforts had there been no town?

554. A spot. A soil, a sully.

Vestal. A virgin dedicated to the service of the goddess Vesta in Rome. These virgins wore a white garment in token of their spotless chastity.

555. For what it soils, i.e., by the contrast between the filth of the stain and the spotless purity of the white garment.

The fashion, sc. of the day, the prevailing fashion.

Runs down. Descends, reaches.

556. Scenes, etc., which still retain their rural appearance. The Greek *skene* (dissyl.) meant a tent, stage for acting, etc., and was then transferred to a portion of the play, a sub-division of an act, what we now call a *scene*. Then it meant the place and its surroundings where the action of this sub-division took place, then any collection of objects in or out of a theatre presented together to the view.

557. Rarely graced, etc., which have lost their rural simplicity of manners.

558. Pastoral retreat. Retirement of the country. (Lat. *Pastor* = a shepherd.)

559. Watch. Keep awake.

560. Invade. Attack. The word is more commonly used of an army entering another country than of individuals. Here the meaning is, to infringe, encroach on.

561. Unscared. Unfrightened.

562. Chilling. Making the blood run cold with horror.

564. With doubtful credit. Things were so peaceable that people scarcely believed in the truth of the accounts of midnight murder.

To frighten babes. As we now frighten infants with ghost stories, so in those days described by Cowper people used to frighten them with accounts of murder which were considered equally improbable.

565. But farewell now. All this is changed. We can no longer have secure nights, etc.

566. Unalarmed. Alarm is from Ital. *al'arme* = To arms!—the cry to rouse soldiers from their rest. As the *r* in Italian is stringly rolled, we get the alternative form in English *alarum* or *larum* (l. 569). In some parts of Ireland, the people say similarly, *arum* for *arm*, etc.

567. See that, etc. Here, polished, as well as primed, represent what has to be seen to. It is not meant that the arms *are* polished and only require priming, but that they require polishing, or keeping in good order, and priming. See that your arms are in good condition, (not rusty) and that the priming is right. This participial use is a latinism.

Primed. The priming was the powder which had to be placed in the *pan* of a flint gun, or pistol, to ensure the firing of the charge.

568. Drop the night-bolt. The night-bolt is an iron bar which is raised in the day time but falls diagonally across the door at night for security.

569. Larum. See note on line 566, *unalarmed*.

Cock's shrill throat. Compare Gray: "The cock's shrill clarion"—*Elegy*, line 19.

570. The cock's crowing is compared to a trumpet, not on account of similarity of sound, but because, as the trumpet summons people to battle so the cock-crow will be the signal for sounds of fear.

571. Hostile feet. The tread of burglars

572. Has. Is attended with.

573. Pathless. And therefore unfrequented.

Wastes. Uncultivated tracts of land. Probably *commons* are meant, that is, unenclosed land used for rearing sheep, grazing asses, etc., and belonging to no individual.

Unconscious. Refers to both woods and wastes which, for poetic effect, are supposed to be gifted with consciousness.

574. Birds, etc. Birds are the tenants of the woods, flocks are the tenants of the wastes.

575. Hazardous. Attended with danger. Notice that hazardous is directly and in its strict sense applied to 'walk.' Bold, can only be used of the same word by transference from the *walker* to whom it is, in its strictly correct sense, attached.

576. Many a, see note on line 269.

577. Inveterate. (Latin, *vetus* = old) firmly established by long continuance, rooted, obstinate. The *same* root is found in *veteran*, an old, seasoned soldier. **Conspires.** Joins or contributes to bring about.

578. The course, etc. Human affairs and the human character are always changing for the worse.

579. Fatal is not used here in the sense of deadly or destructive, but in its earlier meaning of 'doomed,' inevitable. Thus the classic fates, or *Parcæ*, are the deities which overlook and arrange the whole of a man's life from birth to death. The same idea is expressed by 'never fails.'

580. Increase of pow'r, etc. It may be very true that increase of power begets increase of wealth, and even that the other evils mentioned result from it in due course, but this is only one side of the question, Increase of power and increase of wealth may surely be productive of good as well as of evil.

581. Wealth [begets] luxury, and luxury [begets] excess.

Excess. Intemperance, profligacy.'

582. Scrofulous. Scrofula is an hereditary disease. The word is said to be derived from 'scrofa', a sow, because these animals are especially subject to the ailment. The complaint is commonly known as 'King's evil.' It was supposed that the royal touch cured it, and Dr. Johnson, among others, was taken to be touched by Queen Anne. It does not seem quite clear that Cowper's words are to be read literally. No doubt excess may give rise to scrofula, but it seems that under this metaphor the poet may mean avarice and greed of gain.

583. Descends, etc. The disease spreads downwards from the higher to the lower ranks. The metaphor, if it is a metaphor, is still kept up.

584. Contagion. Really, a disease communicated from person to person only by *touch* (Lat. *tangere* = to touch).

585. Taints. (Latin *tingo*, to dye, steep) contaminates.

Graduated scale. Series of ranks divided by fixed intervals, *e.g.*, from the nobleman to the gentleman commoner or squire, from the squire to the farmer or yeoman, from the yeoman to the labouring man.

Scale. (Latin *scala*, a ladder, from *scando*, to climb). This must be distinguished from *scales*, as used in line 484, on which see note.

586. Order. Rank. The chariot to the plough. The rich gentleman who keeps his carriage, to the working ploughman. *Chariot*, strictly speaking, means a particular kind of vehicle, but here it seems to be used generally as we use the word, carriage. Spenser has the form *charet*. In the 18th century, a chariot was the name given to a large heavy carriage, drawn by two or four houses, something like a royal state-coach

587. They that have an arm to check, etc. Those who by their position, official or otherwise, should exercise influence over the lower orders.

588. Licence. The *excess* of line 581. The word really means permission (Lat. *licere*) but by extension of meaning, it is applied to what a man permits *himself* to do, and hence, to *excess*.

589. Office. Duty, not necessarily official duty, but what they owe to God and their neighbour. (Lat. *officium* = duty, whether moral or civic.)

590. Haunt the capital. At an earlier period of English history many country squires spent their lives wholly on their family estates, but as means of communication became improved they used to migrate to London, and having tasted its pleasures, spent most of their time and money in town. Over this change Squire Bracebridge laments in Washington Irving's Sketch Book: "They (the working people) have broken asunder from the higher classes, and seem to think their interests are separate. * * * * I think one mode to keep them in good humour in these hard times would be for the nobility and gentry to pass more time on their estates."

591. All the violence. The unchecked violence.

593. Authority. Vested authority, *i.e.*, persons authorized to act, such as magistrates, justices of the peace, etc. **Sleeps**, is indifferent or inert.

594. Though resident. Even when they (magistrates) are present and conscious of the mischief that is being done.

595. The plump convivial parson. Cowper is describing a class of clergymen less common now than in his own time. **Plump.** Well fed. **Convivial.** Festive, fond of good wine.

Parson is *persona ecclesiæ*, the representative of the Church in addressing God. The word is not a very respectful one, as now used, and Cowper appears to use it with a certain contemptuous depreciation. He would not apply the term to his

preacher in the "Timepiece," 395, etc. We usually speak of 'clergymen,' not of 'parsons.'

596. The magisterial sword, *i. e.*, power to correct and punish. The expression is scriptural. And lay, etc. Neglects his duties both as a clergyman and as a magistrate. 'Your worship' is the usual way of addressing a magistrate. 'Your reverence,' an old form of address to a clergyman.

598. Cushion is, of course, metaphorically used. He indulges in a luxurious and easy way of life.

600. When he should strike. When he should punish severely. The idea of the sword is maintained.

Trembles. Is afraid to act.

601. Himself, etc., shews the cause of his setting free the convict, *because* he is slavishly afraid, etc.

Band of robbers. The word is cognate with *bind* and *bond*, and means a number of men *bound* together to accomplish a certain purpose, here, robbery or crime of any sort.

602. Convict is in the accusative after 'sets free.'

603. Profession, *viz.*, the clerical profession.

Ghostly is an adverb=spiritually.

604. His vice. His own special or besetting sin.

605. Dainty. Scrupulous, nice, conscientious.

606. In lucrative concerns. Where money is to be made.

607. Milk-white hand. Compare the 'lily hand' of the clergyman in the "Timepiece," line 424, and "the delicate-handed" parson of Tennyson's *Maud*.

608. Smutch. A dirty stain. In other words, he may have been bribed to interfere with the course of justice.

609. Foh! An exclamation of disgust.

610. Propitious audit. Favourable hearing. Rent, or tithe paying, is probably referred to.

Tribute. Present.

611. Game, *i. e.*, birds or animals included under the game list, *e. g.*, hares, partridges, etc.

612. Venison. The flesh of deer. (Latin *venari* to hunt.) Formerly used for all kinds of what is called game, *i. e.*, edible objects of chase.

613-658. *Much of the evil due to Universal Military service. The Militia recruit; his appearance before enlistment, his training, the difference in his appearance, and the degeneration of character wrought by soldiering. The various vices he brings back from barrack-room to village.*

Errand. This word is said to be connected with the root *ar* to plough, found in Aryan, the Latin *aro*, etc.

Speeds. Is successful. *Cf.* the old English proverb "God speed [make successful] the plough."

615. Public virtue. Feeling directed towards the common property of the country.

616. Effet, viz., the general laxity and deterioration described above.

617 Universal soldiership. The system of Militia service. Formerly all people under a certain age, and with certain exceptions were liable to be 'drawn,' as it was called, for the Militia. The Militia men were not usually liable to be called on for foreign service, but were enrolled for the protection of the country and to supply the place of regular troops ordered abroad. The militia no longer exists, its place being taken by the Territorial force, service in which is purely voluntary. In former days the trained bands were pretty much the same as the Militia in times nearer our own.

Stabb'd the heart of. A strong expression for 'destroyed.'

619. Brainless rage. Seems to mean uncontrolled and foolish excitement and egotism. The vanity of the soldier is described as being so excessive that it becomes a kind of passion.

620. In whatever cause. No matter what the cause be.

621. Seem most at variance, etc. The names of Havelock, Gordon, and a host of others are a standing contradiction to this.

623. Clown. Not the professional comic man of the circus and pantomime, but a rough, uncultured contryman.

Without guile. It would be interesting to know where Cowper found these excellent rustics. A statute fair in England would supply abundant specimens of country blackguardism equal, of its kind, to anything that can be found in a large town. The immorality of country districts, too, is quite as bad as that of towns.

626. A wrestling match, etc. He might have added, a prize fight, a kind of diversion of which the yokels who attend fairs are, or at any rate used to be, very fond.

627. Balloted. Drawn by lot. The ballot was originally a ball used in voting, and the word was afterwards applied to any means of drawing lots. A man when so drawn could often for a moderate sum procure a substitute. Trembles with fear of what is before him.

628. Sheepish. This word first of all means, timid as a sheep, then clumsily and foolishly shy.

Do off. Do off, take off; so 'don,' means 'do on,' 'put on,' and in colloquial English, 'dup' means 'do up.'

Mumbling. Speaking inarticulately, with the lips partially closed. Mum, means, silent, and is probably connected with the Greek root *mu*, which represents the sound made in closing the lips.

629. Bible oath. Oath taken on the Bible, as is done in courts of justice.

To be, etc. The clown does not know the meaning of the prescribed form of words to which he has to swear.

630. The task performed. The oath being taken, a nominative absolute.

631. Sergeant. The non-commissioned officer who has to instruct the recruit in his drill.

632. His torment, etc. His stupidity is a source of vexation and annoyance to the Sergeant, who revenges himself by ridiculing the unhappy recruit. In Lever's "Charles o'Malley," Mr. Free relates how his father, who was in the North Cork Militia, "nigh broke their hearts with his stupidity. * * * * Every Sergeant in the Regiment had a trial of him, but all to no good," etc.

Jest. Subject of ridicule.

633. Introverted. Lat. *intro-vertere*, turn inwards.

634. Round shoulders. Curved with a stoop brought about by the hard manual labour of the plough, the hoe, and the spade. When a man is what is called 'set up,' his shoulders are said to be square.

Dejected. See trembles, in line 627.

635. Many a curse, sc. from the sergeant.

636. Unapt, etc. This may apply to physical as well as mental constitution. The ploughboy has never exercised his mind and finds it difficult to take in new ideas. His physical conformation also is stiff and disinclined to change. He has walked slouchingly and his shoulders have been rounded during his whole life up to the period of his enlistment, and it is not easy to shake off these old habits.

Stubborn. Unyielding, obstinate.

637. Yet. Though he offers much resistance. **Puts off himself.** Changes his old habit.

638. Likes it well. He is pleased with the improvement effected in his gait and general appearance.

639. Becomes a walk. His former mode of progression scarcely deserved the name of walking.

640. Steps right onward. Walks straight and upright instead of swaying and rolling from one side to the other. **Martial.** Soldierly, from Mars, the god of war.

641. Above. About his head.

642. Meal and larded locks. This refers to the powder mentioned in line 145. Eighteenth century soldiers wore their hair tightly wrapped into a queue or tail, the hair being greased and powdered.

643. With a grace Smartly.

644. His three years. The duration of his service.

Heroship This is satirically used. The militiaman during his period of service in all probability has no opportunity of shewing his bravery or 'heroship,' but he is by way of being a soldier (!) and, therefore, the poet sarcastically calls him a hero.

Expired is absolute. When his time has been served he returns, etc

Indignant. Perhaps means, disdainfully. He has a contempt for civil employment.

645. Slighted. Which he has neglected and deserted for several years. **Cattle** means originally, goods, *chattels*, then especially animals. It is now most commonly used for horned animals, bullocks, cows, etc. Here, however, it probably signifies the horses which draw the plough. In stable language, 'cattle' is frequently used to signify horses. "The moment he (the coachman) arrives where the horses are to be changed he * * * * abandons the cattle to the care of the ostler."—Washington Irving's *Stage Coach*.

To a march. In time to a march. This refers rather to the gait of the driver than to the movements of the cattle. **And sighs,** etc. As pointed out by Mr. Storr, he could always rejoin them by extension of militia service or enlistment.

650. Port. Carriage, demeanour.

651. His ignorance. The infantile simplicity of line 624.

652. To swear, etc. Two at least of the accomplishments, swearing and drinking, could certainly be acquired without entering the Army.

653. Lewdness. Profligacy. Lewd is connected with 'lay,' 'not clerical', and originally meant, belonging to the people in general as distinguished from the clergy. Then, as though the clergy had a monopoly of moral excellence, lewd came to imply a deficiency in clerical sanctity, and so acquired its present ordinary meaning. *Profane* is an analogous word. Etymologically it means

in front or outside of the *fanum* or temple, and therefore not consecrated. Afterwards this meaning was intensified, the idea of negation of sanctity being carried to assertion of impiety.

Sabbath breach. Breaking the sanctity of the sabbath rest, when no work should be done, or ordinary pleasures indulged in. This, from Cowper's puritanical point of view, would be an unpardonable offence.

654. Proficiency. This is of course sarcastic. The proficiency is in swearing, drinking, etc.

655. Gazing Looking on him with surprise.

656. To break, etc. The offence suggested here would be just as likely if he never saw the Militia. See note on line 617.

657. To be a pest, etc. It is not of course intended that to be a pest or nuisance is the direct object of the returned militiamen, but that the pursuits and habits in which he takes most delight have the effect of making him so.

658-690. *Man as an individual contrasted with man when joined together in corporate bodies, as in a regiment, in a municipality or in a trading firm The worser side of military glory.*

659. Man in society. etc. The contrast in the first place certainly seems to be between man in society and man in solitude. Mr. Storr seems to say this is not the case, but Cowper's argument appears to be something as follows:—Society—of some kind—we must have. The faculties do not expand (see line 661) in absolute solitude, but that society must be natural and voluntary. On the other hand artificial or compulsory societies, such as a regiment of soldiers, the crew of a man-of-war, etc., are productive of all sorts of mischief.

660. Blown. Grown, brought to perfection. See note, l. 156.

661. Faculties expanded. His powers stimulated and developed by use and interchange of thought with those about him.

662. Shine out Are brought to light and made conspicuous whereas in solitude they would have rusted in disuse.

664. By regal warrant. As in the case of the Militia, which is raised by direct command of the king. **Self-joined,** voluntarily combined.

665. For interest sake. As in the case of commercial companies. **Swarming into clans,** etc. As in the highlands of Scotland during the first half of the XVIII century. The clans, it should, however, be remembered were not formed for the purpose of any particular war, the institution being patriarchal, and the clans pre-existent to any war of which Cowper or others had record. It is

natural that people, joined like clansmen by family ties, should help each other in war as in other things, but Cowper's words would almost seem to intimate that he thought the clans were formed for the outbreaks of which he might easily remember the last, which took place when he was thirteen years old in 1745.

667. **Bound.** Tied in a bouquet.

668. **Vase.** The Latin *vas* meant a vessel of any kind. The English vase, is, however, nearly confined to the sense of an ornamental vessel for holding flowers, etc.

669. **Fades.** Degenerates. By compression marr'd. Spoiled by too close contact.

670. **Contracts,** etc. Incurs abominable contamination. **Defilement.** The ordinary form, *defile*, is a corruption of 'file,' Anglo-Saxon 'fylan,' to pollute, make foul. In *Macbeth*, III. I. we have the form, 'filed.' 'For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind.'

671. **Chartered boroughs.** Incorporated towns. They are chartered because the rights of corporation are bestowed by the King's Charter or instrument

672. **Burghers.** Freemen of a borough. **Immaculate.** Blameless.

673. **In all their private functions.** In their individual acts.

674. **Become a loathsome body.** It has been humorously said that a Corporation has neither a soul to be damned nor a body to be kicked, *i.e.*, the corporation, as such, is unscrupulous, having no fear of the consequence of its acts. Compare Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France." "The share of infamy that is likely to fall to the lot of each individual in public acts, is small indeed; the operation of opinion being in the inverse ratio to the number of those who abuse power. Their own approbation of their own acts has to them the appearance of a public judgment in their favour."

675. **Dissolution.** The use of this word shows that body in line 674 is used in the sense of corpse, or carcass. **The main.** The public weal.

676. **Unimpeachable.** That cannot be accused. The French, *Empêcher*, is, to hinder, oppose, but this meaning is obsolete in the English word, *impeach*, which means to charge with, accuse of.

677. **Charities.** Benevolences, affections. The charities of domestic life are the duties of a husband and father in the first place, then perhaps benevolence shown to people outside of the family. Charity (Latin *Caritas*) means first, benevolence, good-will towards our fellowmen, etc., and is so used in the Bible. In our modern

English we use it very often, though not exclusively, to signify acts of benevolence, such as the relief of the poor.

678. **Incorporated.** When acting in a body.

679. **Their nature.** Their former kind disposition.

Disclaiming. Renouncing, refusing to entertain.

680. **Common.** General, universal.

681. **Build factories, etc.** The reference is, of course, to the India company.

682. **Dyeing.** Staining the purity of justice with blood.

684. **The field of glory.** The career of a soldier.

685. **Misdeems.** Mistakenly considers. Cowper denies the propriety of the word 'glory,' as applied to a military life. **Dazzled.** Overpowered with admiration.

Array. The army accompanied by the pomp.

686. **With all, etc.** This is closely attached to, array.

Thund'ring pomp. Guns, trumpets, and drums.

687. **Enchanting.** This word does not appear to be used strictly in its ordinary modern sense. When we speak of enchanting music, we usually mean, charmingly delicious strains, but we do not mean that the music has any effect such as would be suggested by the etymological meaning of *enchant*. We mean, in short, simply, very beautiful music. Here, however, enchanting conveys the idea that the mind of the hearer is acted on and affected by the music to the degree of entertaining a wrong or distorted idea of soldiers and soldiering. The effect of military music is understood by enchanting.

Immortal wreaths. Undying glory. The wreath is that of laurel, emblematic of victory and honour.

688. **Is.** The nominative to this is *the field of glory*, line 684. **A school where thoughtlessness is taught, etc.** No doubt in Cowper's time there was a good deal of inconsiderate behaviour, and even reckless living, among army officers but even here his view is exaggerated. Could he have known the life of officers in the present day with their eternal examinations, and hard work, he would have altered his opinion.

689. **Foppery.** Dandyism, coxcombry. Elegance in dress, fashionably cut clothes, and invariable neatness and cleanliness in apparel, have always been more or less the expected characteristic of military officers.

690. **Gallantry,** here means, bravery, though it often means devotion to the fair sex, this being a characteristic, almost a duty, of every soldier.

691-717. *The charms of the country, though neglected, still appeal to the poet. The surroundings of boyhood still exerting their influence. His first efforts in poetry on natural subjects, just as the favourite poets of his youth were those who write of nature, such as Virgil or Milton. The poet's opinion of Milton*

691. It. Anticipatory of the country, l. 64. Cf. it in l. 371.

The great, i.e., the wealthy and influential. See note to l. 371.

693. *The manners and the modes.* The evil ways, which according to the poet, the country has acquired from the town.

694. Wins me. Has the greater attraction for me.

696. Flatter'd me, etc. From which I hoped to derive earthly happiness. The use of the word 'flatter'd,' suggests that all such wishes and plans are futile.

697. But there, etc. Without laying the scene there. This use of 'but' is prepositional. Adams quotes—

"Can I not view a Highland brand,
But [it must match the Douglas hand]

i.e., without its matching."

698. Ere yet liberty, etc. Before I was at liberty to live where I pleased. Liberty is personified, and she is represented as finding the poet, rather than he as finding Liberty, because it was rather through force of circumstances, than by any exertions of his own, that he got the option of choosing his place of residence.

699. Of being free. Of being allowed to exercise my own choice.

701. First-born. This must not be taken too literally. Southey says: "Cowper's father, his uncle Ashley, and his brother, all wrote verses. He himself had been 'a dabbler in rhyme,' he said, ever since he was fourteen years of age, when he began with translating an elegy of Tibullus. The earliest of his compositions that has been preserved is an imitation of the 'Splendid Shilling,' written at Bath, in 1748, on finding the heel of a shoe: he was then in his seventeenth year."

702. Sportive. Playful, writing for amusement, rather than with any serious intention. Jingling. Shaking so as to cause sound. Mr. Storr considers that the metaphor is from the fool's cap and bells. In certain provincial districts *rhyming* is called *jingling*. The present annotator has heard the following:—"Yes! he writes beautiful poetry, *jingling*, every line of it." Jingling her poetic bells, may perhaps, therefore, mean trying her powers in rhyme.

703. Ere yet. Before she had acquired taste, and discernment.

704. No bard, etc. I cared only for pastoral poetry. Whose lyre was turned, etc. Whose verses were written in praise of natural scenery. After *but*, we must supply 'those,' or 'the poet.'

705. Heroes and their feats, etc. I took no pleasure in reading of warlike deeds.

706. Weary. Agrees with, me, and the passage may be paraphrased 'whereas, on the other hand, I was never weary,' etc. The pipe of Tityrus. Rural or pastoral poetry. Tityrus is a shepherd in Virgil's first Eclogue.

"Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi."

Tityrus, thou reclining under the shadow of a spreading beech, etc.

The name Tityrus has come to be ordinarily used for a pastoral poet.

The pipe. The rustic song. The pipe of the shepherd was the Pandean pipe, a collection of reeds placed side by side and bound together, and varying, by regular gradation, in size.

709. Indeed a poet's charm. The emphasis on 'indeed' does not imply that Milton's verse then and at no other time was attractive. The difference is in the reader, not in the poetry.

Then, etc. When I was a boy I thoroughly relished Milton's verse.

710. Paradise. Milton's great poems, 'Paradise Lost,' and 'Paradise Regained,' or, more probably, the description of Paradise in Book II of *Paradise Lost*, since Cowper says that it is the poetry of natural description that then chiefly engrossed him. Surpass'd the struggling efforts, etc. I could not find words, boy as I was, to express my admiration.

712. Speak is a poetical expression in this sense. In prose we should rather say declare, or express. I danced for joy. This must not be taken literally. What is meant is that Cowper received very great pleasure from reading *Paradise Lost*. That poem is not calculated, literally, to make any one dance.

713. So ripe an age. Such a matured time of life. This word *ripe*, may be taken as ironically used if considered from the point of view of the poet as he is writing, or it may be used in all simplicity by the boy of fourteen whose feelings are being described.

714. As twice seven years. See note to line 701. His beauties had then first, etc. He was surprised that he had not found out the excellence of Milton before.

715. Admiring still. Continuing to admire him more, the more I read of him.

716. With regret, etc. He was sorry that he had passed all his years without having appreciated Milton.

717. Joy. The pleasure derived from reading Milton.

718-730. Cowley, *the merits and demerits of his poetry; his longings for country retirement. Changes in opinion as to the value of his poetry.*

718. Life I loved. Country life.

719. Pathetic. Affecting the reader. In its pursuit determined. Constant in his wish for country retirement.

720. Possessing, etc. Exulting in its attainment as lovers do in the favour of their mistresses.

721. Transports. Moments of surpassing delight, when the mind is carried away.

722. Studied, prized. The object of these words is "thee," in l. 718.

723. Ingenious. Original, inventive. The ingenuity, however, was too much wasted on the invention of what were known as conceits, conceits, i. e., quaint comparisons and far-fetched metaphors.

Reclaim'd by modern lights. Reformed in my taste by the more correct judgment of modern poets and modern critics. The quaint affections of Cowley and other poets of the "conceited" school, as it was called, were rejected by the more sensible poets of the modern school.

724. I cannot but lament, etc. I cannot help regretting that thy brilliant intellect was wasted in the discussion of academical subtleties.

725. Still, appears to contain the notion of adversation to lament. I am sorry your intellect should have been misapplied, *still* I have a deep reverence for it.

727. Courtly, etc. Polished, though living in seclusion. The idea of retirement and solitude usually suggests a roughness of manner. Courts, in other words social intercourse with our fellow-men, promote polish and urbanity of manners. Cowley combined retirement with polish.

728. Though stretched, is adversative to, not unemployed.

730. For a lost world. For the loss of society and connection with human affairs. Solitude. Seclusion.

Abraham Cowley was born in 1618, and was educated at Westminster School. In his fifteenth year he published some poems, two of which had been written at the age of ten and twelve respectively. In the preface to the first edition of his works, published in 1656, he declares that his desire has been for some days past, and does still

very vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and forsake this world for ever. He passed his last seven or eight years by the Thames, away from the stir of London, first at Barns Elms, and then at Chertsey. His epic poem, *Dauidis*, or history of the life of the Jewish King David, is said to have suggested many points to Milton which he afterwards made use of.

731-761. *Love of nature an essential part of the human mind. However various their nature, men all appreciate the loveliness of God's world. The feeling survives even in the crowded city. Evidence of this in London's gay villas on the outskirts, in little gardens where scarcely anything grows, in the tiny plants that townspeople cherish.*

732. **Ingredient in the compound.** Element in the creation or admixture of man.

733. **Infused.** Instilled.

734. **Throughout.** In every case.

735. **Discriminated,** etc. Distinguished one man from another

736. **Touches.** Light effects. **Of the hand.** This, of course, is used metaphorically, as of a painter improving his picture by slight, deft touches of his brush, or rather from the difficulty of describing the work of God without using language applicable only to man. In the same way we say that God *hears* our prayers, *sees* our actions, is jealous, angry, etc., though the conception of the God believed in by Christians is of a being 'without body, parts, or passions.'—*1st Article of Religion.*

Art. This word again is used for the same reasons as indicated above. Art, implies *acquired* skill, but this is quite incompatible with our idea of omnipotence.

737. **Diversified,** qualifies 'stokes' and 'touches.'

738. **Twins at all points.** Exactly alike. **Obtains.** Holds good, is recognized as a law.

739. **All appreciate natural scenery.**

740. **Taste.** Relish, appreciate. This is an old sense of the word, common in the reign of Anne and of the first two Georges. We have nearly discarded the use of the verb in this sense, though we retain the meaning in the substantive. "I have no taste (relish) for that kind of amusement," is modern English, but "I do not taste {relish} that kind of amusement," though it once was, is now not ordinary English. **Formed.** Trained.

741. **Tutor'd.** Cultivated. **A relish more exact.** A more precise and educated appreciation. Some poets of the age succeeding Cowper's would perhaps question the correctness of this view.

743. **Flame.** Passionate sentiment.

744. Feeds. Nurses. Business is said by Earle to be from the French *besogne*, or the earlier *besoignes*, which has the same meaning of, business, labour, work to be done. The 'ness' in business, is not the formative as in 'goodness,' 'wickedness,' but a part of the word. Earle's whole remarks on this word, section 83, "Philology of the English Tongue," should be read

745. Whatever, followed by 'of' is a Latinism, *quicquid virtutis* = whatever (of) true worth.

Smother. Suppress.

747. Quench. Is to completely extinguish. It. *i.e.*, "the love of Nature's works" in l. 731. **Abate** is to lessen, diminish.

748. The fact that the Londoner leaves the city and prefers living in a villa or country house, where he can grow a garden, and have shrubs and trees about him, is an evidence of man's love of nature. **Swarth**, or *swarthy*, means dark coloured. The Indian referred to is apparently the so-called North American Indian. These people are, however, better known as *red* men.

Belt of beads. This is worn for ornament. Smoky London is the dusky Indian. The bright villas are the shining beads. **Beads.** The original meaning was 'prayers.' To count the prayers little balls were strung, and passed along, one for each *bead* or prayer, and the meaning came afterwards to be transferred from the prayers to the balls by means of which they were counted.

750. Unadulterate. Pure. **Glimpse**, may mean either a *partial* view, or a view of the whole, but temporary. **Breath** and **glimpse** are anticipatory of 'they,' by a construction already noticed; ll. 377, 691.

751. Cheer. Refresh. **Cheer** meant the head or face, then the expression of the face, then that expression limited to a gay or pleasant one, then that which causes such expression as good food, etc. The meaning of the verb is taken directly from the noun in its sense of gay expression.

752. Brace. Stimulate, strengthen. **Citizen**, means one whose days are passed in the city of London.

753. Stifling. Close, choking all wholesome growth. **Bosom.** Interior.

754. In which, etc. In spite of the fact that nothing thrives in it.

755. Rich, is used with a pleasing kind of sympathetic irony. The poor possessor of the wretched bit of garden imagines himself quite rich or fortunate in its possession. **Much consoled.** Deriving much comfort from the fact that, etc.

756. Mournful mint. The mint is called mournful on account of its dull colour.

757. Night-shade. The common Night-shade, a small annual with small white flowers, is meant, *not* the deadly Nightshade or belladonna, which is perhaps better known. **Valerian.** A strong scented flower, of which cats are said to be very fond. **Grace Decorate.** Well, so called because it is surrounded on all sides, by tall houses.

758. Serve. Provide.

Hint. Reminder. The irony mentioned in note to line 755 is kept up. He is reminded that there really *are* such things as green fields and trees, a fact which he might be in danger of forgetting in the smoky town, were it not for the patch which he calls a garden. Dickens, in "Great Expectations," describing Wemmick's house at Walworth, with its grounds, says 'there was a piece of water with an *island* in the middle, which might have been the *salad* for supper.'

759. That Nature lives. That there is such a thing as Nature.

760. Livery. Dress or uniform, said to be from, *deliver*, because it was delivered or given to servants at stated intervals.

761. Though sickly, etc. Though they (the Night-shade, valerian, etc., which he cultivates) are but sickly representatives.

Exuberant whole. Universal growth of nature.

762-779. Other evidences of the craving for country sights and sounds, even amongst the poorest.

762. Casement. A kind of window made to open on hinges like a door instead of being raised like the sash of an ordinary window.

Creeping herbs, or "Creepers," as they are commonly called, are plants which cling to something as a support.

763. Sashes. Window frames. **Fronted with.** Having in front of them, *i. e.*, on the window sill.

764. Orange, myrtle, etc. These would be in pots. **Weed.** This word is generally used to signify a worthless plant. It is here applied to a flower, possibly on account of its plain appearance. There is another word 'weed,' a garment, which must not be confused with 'weed,' a plant.

765. The Frenchman's darling. Is the feathered pink, or, as it is called, *minionette*, from the French *mignonette*. It is a very plain-looking little flower, but has a very delicate fragrance.

Are they not? etc. This is a question of appeal.

766. Immured. Pent up in the walls of. Lat. *murus*, a wall.

767. Inborn. Natural. Thirst of, etc. Thirst for rural scenes would be the more ordinary construction.

769. Supplemental shifts. Substitutional contrivances, little devices by which he tries to keep alive, and to remind himself of, his love for country sight and sounds. The best, in the best way. Best, is an adverb, *not* an adjective qualifying shifts.

770. The most unfurnished, etc Those who are in the most destitute condition.

771. Brick-wall bound. Limit of the city and its buildings.

772. Treat is used in a sense now nearly obsolete. *To treat* means to entertain, and is a word much used in that sense in the English of Queen Anne's day. To treat the ladies to fiddles or to tea, means to pay the expense of entertaining them with music, tea, etc To treat the lungs with air means to afford the lungs the unusual luxury of a breath of fresh air

773. The burning instinct The inward craving for nature.

774. Crazy. Rickety, ramshackle, having a tendency to tumble to pieces. Planted thick. *Plant*, has two constructions. We *plant* the garden with flowers or we *plant* flowers in the garden. In the text the first of these constructions is used.

775. Duly Regularly. Pitcher Jug *The pitcher stands a fragment* is, in other words, a broken pitcher stands there.

776. Spoutless, because the spout is broken. It is because they are damaged and otherwise worthless that the vessels are used to hold a few flowers.

777. Sad, because while they indicate the craving for green nature, they point also to the impossibility of gratifying that craving. How, qualifies 'regrets.' Close-pent, confined, from to *pen*=to shut up.

779. A peep. Just a glance at or reminiscence of, as described above.

Can is used in its old transitive sense, and is not here auxiliary.

780-801. *The poet's welcome to the country life. It provides him with all the pleasure he wants, while he can view with equanimity the struggles of ambition. His disposition is satisfied with lowlier pleasures, with quiet and retirement.*

780. Patroness. Nurse and supporter. Ease. Freedom from anxiety.

781. Heart-consoling. Soothing.

782. Throng'd abode, etc. The city.

783. Unknown qualifies 'pleasures.'

784. Address himself. This is in the imperative mood. Let anybody who will, address himself, *i.e.*, turn his attention.

785. Emolument, is derived from the Latin *emolior*, to work out, produce by great labour. The word *emolumentum* means 'exertion,' then the result of such exertion, *i.e.*, pay or profit.

787. Thwart. Cross, interfere with.

788. Some must be great. In Maria's letter, "Twelfth Night," II V., Malvolio is told that—'some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.'

Great offices will have, etc. 'Will have' appears to mean, demand, require, insist upon having.

789. God gives, etc. It is scarcely necessary to point out, even to a child, that this is not the case. We constantly see the 'square man in the round hole,' and *vice versa*.

791. Lets him fall. Settles his position.

792. Niche is a recess in the thickness of a wall for a statue or bust. Here it means the particular position for which, according to Cowper's fatalistic theory, each man is destined by Providence.

793. To the deliv'rer, etc. Cowper may have had Washington in his mind.

794. A tongue, etc. Eloquence to dilate on, describe in detail.

796. To monarchs dignity. This may be so occasionally, but avoiding mention of living monarchs, we may refer to James I., whose behaviour could by no stretch of imagination be called 'dignified.' To judges sense. This certainly *ought* to be the case.

797. Artists. Appears here to be used in the old sense of artisan or mechanic. In modern English the word is usually restricted to painters, etc., persons skilled in one of the liberal arts.

799. Low vale. Humble or unpretending position. That, relates to 'mind.'

801. There. In the retirement of Olney.

P A R A P H R A S E.

1—15. Listen, and you may hear the clanging horn of the postman, as he crosses the unbroken length of the bridge, required by the floods of winter, in whose calm surface the moon just now is brightly reflected. Yes! here he comes, this messenger of the busy world outside us, with muddy boots, belted waist, and hair stiffened with the frost, and news from every quarter tumbling about in the bag at his back. He is faithful in his care of the well filled bag which has been entrusted to him, but indifferent to its contents, his only anxiety being its conveyal to the inn for which he is making, where, when he has left the bag among those who wait for it, he proceeds on his journey. Though cold, he is in good spirits, and whistles on his road from sheer absence of care, and though he bears sad news to many, and good tidings to a favoured few, he cares not for the nature of either news.

16—35. He cares no more than the horse which carries him for the news of fires, collapse of the funds, domestic occurrences, or the melancholy out-pourings of some sad letter-writer, or youths' protestations to their ladies or those ladies' answers. Still, what a momentous packet may this be whose approach is announced by the stirring sounds! What may not its news be! Are our armies on the alert, or are they still lying inactive on the shores of the Atlantic as though influenced by soporifics? Is India liberated, and does she enjoy her Oriental pomp in peace, or do we continue to oppress her? I am impatient to read the important Parliamentary debates, popular speeches, sarcastic answers, the combined sagacity and humour, the sound reasoning and the broad joke with which the bag is crowded. I long to repeat and publish once more all these mixed arguments and debates the reports of which are now confined in the postman's budget.

36—49. Now then, let's poke the fire and fasten the shutters, drop the curtains, wheel the couch round, and with the hot and hissing urn steaming in front of us while we have a refreshing cup of tea let us hail the approach of evening. Far different from this is the evening spent by the frequenter of the theatre whose face glows with heat and perspiration, and who is jammed in on every side while his neighbours dig his ribs with their elbows till his remonstrances are louder than the ranting declamation of the actor. Equally pitiable is the position of the man who with burning feet and palpitating head gulps the inflated eloquence of indignant patriots or placid and smiling office-seekers.

50—72. This sheet of printed matter, which is fortunate enough never to be criticised, on the contents of which, while I read it, the hearers hang in wrapt and attentive curiosity, and silence unbroken even by the remarks of ordinarily talkative ladies, presents to our view an abstract of what the changeable and busy world contains. In one part are described the lofty and inaccessible posts which tempt the ambitious man, who sees before him as his final object the highest official rank. With many a struggle and much ardent longing he strives for the difficult goal, but closely competing with him in the quest is a popular rival who skilfully displaces him and gains the coveted post from which he too is presently ousted. In another place we read the out-pourings of smooth and figurative eloquence. With affected modesty the speaker professes to be ashamed and sorry to occupy public attention, but still entreats a favourable hearing for such remarks as he has to offer, worthless as they may be. Poor, bashful gentleman! One thing, at any rate, can be said for him, that the absence of sense and of common information which he modestly confesses is invariably found to characterise his utterances.

73—87. In another page we come across floods of stilted oratory, and another page is covered with sheets of hopelessly incomprehensible nonsense. Humorous remarks occupy

another page, and the national calamities are made a subject for jest and sarcasm. The rest of the paper is filled with a confused and varied medley; advertisements of colourings and restoratives for faded beauty, false teeth and hair, perfumes extracted from everything is the air, the earth, and the water, ambrosial elixirs, essences of divine fragrance, sermons for sale, the dates of aldermanic dinners, popular music, balloon excursions, diving bell experiments, and the quack Katterfelto astonished at the very wonders which he himself performs to earn his daily bread.

88—106. It is agreeable to contemplate from one's retirement the doings of such a world, to know all about the bustle of the crowded capital, untroubled by the press, and to hear the stirring news which comes from every quarter with so little personal excitement over such matters that our feelings are not materially roused. Sitting so quietly, and speculating in this calm way on the world and its affairs, it seems as though I occupied some safe ground unapproachable by mortal ills, where I am free from the necessity of troubling myself with any worldly matters. The world revolves with all its inhabitants, and I watch them and their proceedings in undisturbed serenity. Rumours of war and battle have no terrors for me. I regret the necessity, but without alarm. I am sorry for the evil passions which set man against his brother-man, and seem to hear in the distance the trumpet blast and the cannon's roar which are indicative of wrath and blood-shed with sadness unmingled with fear.

107—119. As the bee wanders from flower to flower, so man travels from one country to another. He collects information about the habits, and institutions, and mode of Government of every country. Wherever he goes he picks up new facts, and at his return publishes the valuable and interesting knowledge he has acquired—a positive literary banquet for my delight. I accompany him in his travels. I seem to be a fellow-voyager with him, and when, from the mast-head he discovers some new-country, I, in imagination,

see it too. I sympathize with him in his troubles and rejoice in his successful escapes from danger. In short my fancy like the index hand of a clock travels round the world without consciousness of being abroad (or) while I am all the while seated in my easy-chair.

120—138. I love Winter, season though it be of defacement and deformity, with its snow-like ashes suggestive of the hoariness of age, when all moisture is frozen and white icicles hang from projecting points like the beard from the chin of an ancient man, when nature is over-clouded, and each tree is leafless, when sledges take the place of wheels, and furious blasts of wind aid their progress. Yes! even with all these disadvantages, I love the dismal and terrific winter. It is true that in winter the sun lingers long before he shows himself in the gloomy East, and the period between morn and noon, and between noon and sunset is curtailed, as though day unwilling to stay with us, were anxious to reach its bed in the West. Still, the loss of daylight is atoned for by seasonable pleasures and more leisure for friendly chat and instruction combined with amusement, when the members of the family who have been scattered during the hours of day are quickly re-united, and their minds, which have been also directed towards different objects by the varied business of the day, are now concentrated on the same subjects.

139—157. Yes! we welcome Winter as the fount of heart-felt pleasure domestic comfort and family joy, and all the gladness familiar to the unpretending home where the evening is spent without fear of interruption from outside visitors. No noisy carriages come near our gate, no insolent lacquey, skilful in the art of double knocks, bangs our door with re-echoing noise. No horses are made to stand in the cold till their coughing and shivering indicate the mischief done them, while inside the house mute visitors sit and fan themselves regardless of the suffering animals outside. In our home the needle is constantly at work, the embroidered work gets larger and larger as the skilfully imitated flowers with leaves and

sprays of green and twining shoots tastefully arranged are carefully and bit by bit portrayed on the white cambric by the expert hands of the ladies ; till they form a garland which can never wither, consisting, as it does, of flowers which are produced in most abundance when all natural flowers perish.

158-193. Poetry and history, which one reads aloud to the others, help us to pass the evening. This pursuit is relieved by the pleasant strains of the harpsichord, whose sweet music is elicited from the vibrating chords accompanied by the melodious voice of one of the ladies, which though harmonizing with the instrument is clearly and separately heard above the instrumental music. These divert the busy work of the ladies whose needles are nimbly plied without the sense of weariness. When our reading is done we proceed to our usual simple supper, a plain meal such as the ancient Romans were content with when their famous heroes sat in the moonlight outside their modest dwellings, and under the protecting shade of some old tree, partook of their frugal repast of lettuces and eggs. Then follows conversation which, though never frivolous, is never heavy, and from which innocent humour is not banished nor harmless fun austere forbidden. Nor do we foolishly shrink from mentioning God's name after the fashion of scoffing worldlings, to whom all religion is fanaticism, and who consider their Maker as obstructive to all pleasure. No ! we gladly recognize His claims to worship, and this solemn subject often calls for our gratitude and adoration, while our memory brings back to us with accurate recollection the troubles and dangers from which He has protected us, the pitfalls He has enabled us to shun, the baffled temptations of Satan, the unexpected deliverance, the preservation of life, and the restoration of tranquillity, all of them the tokens of the never-failing love and care of the Almighty. Oh, evenings worthy of the Gods ! said Horace. Yes ! say I, and our evenings are still more precious and desirable than yours, for I and the friends about me are more enlightened, and possess more heavenly knowledge than the Roman.

194 — 206. Is winter, so spent, disagreeable? Does it require the amusement of the theatre with its smoking lamps and the close atmosphere of a malodorous crowd to soften our feelings, or the quick tart repartees of pert and voluble comedians to rouse our sense of humor? The self-satisfied actor, as he casts a stolen glance over a crowded play-house, and sees rows of faces after faces, from pit to gallery, all unbent in a general broad laugh as though under the influence of a universal impetus, does not see a single face indicative of such pure or real pleasure as ours.

207 — 231. We want no cards, and can amuse ourselves without the varied contrivances invented by idle people to supply the vacuum of an empty mind, to lessen weariness and pass time along. Time passes over our heads softly and swiftly and harmlessly as a dove's flight, but time as passed by worldlings, is time disguised and misused. Such time, were I to personify it, would be best described as having variegated feathers and a peacock's train, not marked with the usual spots, but dotted black and red with quadrangular-shaped diamonds, bloody hearts, clubs to represent contention, and spades typical of death and burial. The conventional hour-glass of time is turned into a dice box, and a billiard cue takes, and fitly takes, the place of the all-destroying scythe. So equipped Time has attractions for a world which, through habit and usage, is prone to ignore his value, and whose inhabitants are most pleased when they have least to do, and who are never satisfied except when wasting time. Even young girls, at whose age their mothers were dressed as children, wear the garb of full-grown women, watch and learn from the playing of their elders, and, night after night, finding some empty chair from which they can observe the game, learn its every manoeuvre, and become mistresses of the science.

232 — 242. But this is enough of reproof. Writing discursively as I do where am I to pause, or how am I to continue? As the traveller to distant regions often leaves the road to examine some rough crag or crumbling castle which

disappoints his expectations, and then on his return publishes his account of it that people may know how far he travelled for such poor recompense, so I, too, being, as it were, a painter with apparatus all ready, though my intention was to describe very different subjects, have been led away to discuss cards and puppets, and every other trifle suggested by my wandering fancy.

243—266. Come again, sweet and peaceful evening-tide, return and stay with us. My imagination represents thee as slowly pacing in the mottled West with the dignified steps of a matron while night presses close on thy footsteps. With one hand you spread forgetfulness over bird and beast, while with the other you steep man in insensibility to all his woes and cares. Thou art not gorgeously decorated, nor dost thou, like plain-seeming night, require the help of thick-spread brilliants. A few stars are sufficient to set off thy beauty, but the moon belongs to thee as well as to night, not rising on high in proud pre-eminence of splendour, but low down decorating thy golden girdle, less bright than at night time but with an apparently larger circumference. Come and you will find me your devotee in placid calmness, or your coming will have the effect of tranquillizing my mood. For placidity accompanies your approach; and whether I spend the calm hours of evening in reading, in music, or in the composition of verse, in weaving nets to protect the fruit from the birds, or reeling silk at the bidding of those fair ones whose behest must be obeyed, I never despise it, but am always glad of its approach.

267—301. When the drawing-rooms of fashionable life begin to shine with lamps, whose light is reflected from numerous tall mirrors in which even the Philistine giant might have seen his huge upright stature inclusive of his lofty plume, I too, begin to enjoy myself. But instead of such brilliant lights as those referred to I am perhaps for some time content with the dim light from the fire-place, which raises shadows to the roof, to dance and quiver there in grotesque movement, as the flame rises and falls.

spent in this way in the uncertain light of our sitting-room affords me much gratification. Such a dim illumination is well suited to the mind, whether in a contemplative or thoughtless frame, whether it be occupied by some new subject for meditation or disinclined for reflection of any kind. You will perhaps ridicule me, you who are conscious of more energetic qualities, who never experience any sluggishness of thought, and neither feel nor require any cessation of mental activity. I am sensible of, and boldly own to, an intellect which is sometimes suspended. Often and often has my erratic and grotesque imagination presented me, though fully awake, with a vision of buildings, trees and whimsical faces portrayed in the glowing embers, while I watched with intent gaze till my fancy evolved the imaginary objects before me. With equal interest have I quietly watched the flimsy deposits of soot that hang trembling from the bars, and are supposed by superstitious people, who are always ready to prognosticate in spite of numerous disappointments, to indicate the approach of a stranger. In this way the intellect rests in empty idleness and is strengthened by the temporary repose. All this while the drowsy condition of the mind is disguised with the appearance of profound meditation in the features, as if one, instead of being absolutely inert, were plunged into difficult and profound speculations.

302—332. Thus I often spend an hour in the evening lying comfortably back, until by and by the cold gust which brushes the fastened shutter recalls my gathered senses and sharply breaking the frail materials from which fancy contrives her unreal trifles renews my waking powers. How quiet is my retirement, and how the keen and biting frost and the boisterous wind outside enhance the charm of the quiet and snugness which we possess indoors. In the evening I noticed the varied colours of meadow and wood-land, the fields though partially withered, still green, and the land were a few months since the ripe yellow corn was waving, of a rich brown, having been recently subjected to the plough-share. I saw in the distance the rich fallow land with its varied crop of weeds,

which, too, have their use, being grazed by the busily-feeding sheep, each choosing what he liked best, while all the bare trees around the horizon seemed dark and gloomy, and scarcely distinguishable from the similar darkness of evening. With the morning comes a complete change, which even as I write is noiselessly, gently and almost imperceptibly transfiguring the whole appearance of nature. The soft snow shower falls fast, the feathery particles unremittingly dropping and noiselessly covering everything on the ground make all things uniformly white. The earth gratefully accepts the growing shelter and the young and delicate grass which was liable to be withered by the east wind flourishes safely beneath the warm covering.

333—356. In a world like this, full of troubles, and where no one finds unmixed happiness, or at any rate where such happiness is sure to be quickly succeeded by calamity, it seems prudent and by no means inconsistent with benevolence to compare our lot with that of less fortunate people, so that we may learn to bear patiently those lesser evils which trouble ourselves; and pity others whose troubles are heavier than ours. The traveller has now a hard time of it, so has the waggoner as he trudges along in his heavy boots alongside his steaming horses. The wagon creaks heavily along, much hindered by the masses of hard snow which cling to the encumbered wheels, and as it moves noiselessly and slowly along, looks like a vast pile of snow. The straining horses stretch their nostrils wide while their breath is driven violently downwards in their struggling efforts, and soon crystallized on their projecting breasts. The waggoner well-constituted to endure the fierce assault of such a storm, with blinking eyes and wrinkled cheeks grins in the face of the storm and trudges on. With one hand he holds his hat except when he requires both to sway his long and pliant whip, whose frequent crack always has the desired effect.

357—373. Fortunate, inestimably fortunate fellow in his exemption from that susceptibility to hardship which characterizes more cultured folks! His strong and firm body,

though it feels the cold, is none the worse for it. No doctor is ever needed to reckon his vigorous pulsations, and the keen east wind productive often of disease, which penetrates every fibre of the delicate in health, is breathed by him with benefit and pleasure. His time passes without any domestic troubles, for he has no companion but his waggon and the hard-worked animals which draw it, which unable to help themselves are maintained by his care of them. Let us hope that he treats them with compassion, and that in spite of his rough outside he will feel for them some consideration which, it must be admitted, wealthy people as they drive about with unnecessary speed, do not always show in spite of their affectation of humanity.

374—390. A night like this excites pity and sympathy in the hearts of all compassionate people for those who, though poor, are not idle, who are retiring, meek and tidy in their habits. Warmed as they are through the working hours of the day by their own exertions, they during that period can defy the severity of the weather, but still at evening time, through insufficient food and clothing, they suffer from the cold. The careful mother tremblingly sets fire to the poor heap of sticks which for a few minutes burns brightly, but, like all earthly pleasures, is soon extinguished. She carefully tends the wretched remains of the fire, and while her little children crowd together and spread their hands for warmth as they crouch over the embers, she stands back, willingly suffering the cold as long as the young ones are warmed. Her husband suffers less than she does, inasmuch as he is more hardened to the cold, and through his active habits the blood circulates more freely in his veins but the wretchedness of his family reflected on him too.

391—406. The dip candle which, at the close of day, I saw carried hanging from the chilly fingers, is soon burnt out, and the remains of the brown loaf being taken from the shelf and devoured without the accompaniment of cheese, or the still more expensive relish of butter, nothing remains for them but to sleep, for where pinching poverty is felt, the thoughts are

narrowed, and there is but little pleasure in talking. With all this rigid economy they do not prosper, their utmost attempts at saving money barely enable them to keep their poor list of furniture, bed, stool, and pots and pans, from being sold by auction. They just contrive to exist without importuning unwilling people to relieve their wants, but are conscious of nothing else to gratify the self-respect which keeps them above beggary, nor have they any consolation except their reciprocal affection.

407—428. I cannot but admire this long-enduring and gentle couple, for they deserve my admiration, choosing as they do rather to eat the bread of honest independence gained with hard work, and eaten in a sad mood, than to put up with harsh looks and insolent rejection at the hands of rascally officials who perform their duty (of relieving the poor) with unfairness plentifully helping noisy and importunate beggars, who assume the externals of poverty, but often refusing petitioners who, though meanly clad, would be ashamed to appear in rags; who though half-starved are cleanly, and make their application for relief with a timidity distressing to the spectator, and who being rejected on account of the very efforts they make to keep up a decent appearance quietly, and uncomplainingly draw back. But there is hope in store for them. Time will right their troubles, for time will increase their family, and then their many children properly brought up, but at present too young to be serviceable, shall soon, as years pass by, find strength and work on which to employ it. Meanwhile, they shall be relieved as far as our ability extends, for we know their merits, and that relief will be increased by one abler than we are to help them. I refer to the man who when poor strangers are in need, refuses them nothing but his name.

429—465. But most of those who whine about their misery are responsible for their own troubles, which they have brought on themselves by idleness or through spending their money in drink. The nocturnal robber wanders abroad in quest of spoil, anxious only how to make up for his idle days

by the mischief and rascality he works at night. There is but a poor chance now for the gardener's fence, or the farmer's enclosure of shrubs intertwined and fixed to poles firmly driven into the soft bank. The thief wrenches up the stakes with strength gladly exerted in work of this kind, but which seems to desert him when honest work is to be done, and having bundled together as many as an ass can carry he slips quietly off when the load is complete. Equal danger attends the wooden shed in which the neat rows of split timber and roots for fuel are sure to be plundered by him. He bursts open to the door, however carefully fastened, where the cock roosts among his wives, lordly and unsuspecting of danger. He plucks the fine old bird from his roosting place and along with the hens he pops him into his roomy bag, while the unfortunate cock resists in vain and expresses in loud notes his surprise at this unexpected change of dwelling. And all this is done, *not* to feed his family. There would be some excuse for him if sorrow for their wretchedness and destitution bent his sense of right and wrong, and led him to do evil in order to help them; but they may starve unheeded for his part, and as well as the public, but in a greater degree, they are injured by his vices, inasmuch as being immediately subject to the effects of his neglect they are deprived by him of everything. He is a merciless and unfeeling ruffian, and his vileness is due to the unconquerable love of drink which is at the bottom of all his misdeeds. Hanging ought to be the punishment of these rascals who starve their families, who are merciless to their children, their own very flesh and blood, and who neglect and injure the woman they have sworn to cherish.

466—486. Go where you will through town or large city, or any collection of houses in this glorious country of England, be the place ever so wretched and poverty-stricken, at every twentieth step your nose is suddenly offended by a smell of the pent fumes of beer and tobacco from the licensed piggeries known as taverns, strong enough to knock down a sober man. Here wrapt and hidden in spiral clouds of smoke, and drinking

hard, sit the yokel, the footman, and the stable boy. The artizan here drowns in forgetful draughts all remembrance of his work. The smith, the shoe-maker, and the carpenter, the tailor and the baker, are all noisy, each knows everything better than his neighbours, and each is drunk. The melancholy moaning of the squeaking fiddle seems to bewail its own disregarded notes and useless melody. Whatever they talk about is sure to produce angry discussion, while dire Discord, who presides at such scenes, takes her place on the sign-post, and with unsettled balance keeps the quarrel going. On one side ignorance preponderates, but this is counter-balanced by obstinacy and conceit on the other side, are state of things complacently beheld by the genius of the scene.

487—512. There is fearful and frequent swearing and mouth-filling execrations far coarser than the polished and ornate oaths in vogue among our modern statesmen, whose profanity adds vigour to their oratory, and who gain a certain reputation for their strong language. The tavern, then, is the training place in which the minds of unsophisticated rustics are educated in the accomplishment of using bad language, which some may utter with a more refined polish, but none more readily learn. Here they are guided in the course that leads from happiness and comfort to poverty and theft, until at length they become such a nuisance and encumbrance to the public, that they are thrust out from the community of their fellow-men. But it's of no use to find fault with them. It is useless to call attention in my poems to a general nuisance which, like the vile refuse with which the rustic manures his dry fields, though offensive, is profitable. The taxes are swelled by the lucrative out-come of all this debauchery and the foul fluids incessantly dripping from innumerable casks, when operated on by the magic power of the public financier, are turned into gold for ministers to play at ducks and drakes with. Drink yourselves into delirium then my worthy friends. You get drunk for your country's sake, your country demands it and you must obey her imperative call. To aid her revenues you must use your swallows. You can all of you guzzle, and that's all that's wanted.

513 — 552. I wish I could have lived in those halcyon times sung of by poets ; those perfect seasons, and rural spots celebrated by Virgil, and Sydney in his prose poem of "Arcadia." Girls in those days were spotless and youths appreciated their chastity. Innocence is represented as having left the court and taken up its abode in the pastoral scenes. Simple and innocent people were still left, it is said, to trace the woods and meadows. Profanity and lewdness were almost unknown, and rare instances of them were regarded with horror and speedily corrected. Such is the description, but alas ! it is purely imaginary. There never were such times, and the idea of them was only evolved from the poet's fancy, but being described as if really existing this pleasing deception was received as true. Well, be it so, still it must have been worth living in a time when such a description could be accepted as possible, for in our own time virtue is so little known that the bare conception of a state of things where she is the ruling spring of action is extravagant, and impossible to credit. The fact is, you know, we have grown *genteel*. The country-girl whose maiden modesty and prettiness, simple unsophisticated manners, and becoming dress set her off so well that she almost equalled the shepherdesses of our pastoral poems, is now never seen. There are none such. What we see now is a head decorated with pinned-up frills and smart ribbons fluttering about it, artificially raised to a vast height and increased to more than any natural size, with half its hair false, the decoration of some fashionable hair-dresser. The owner of all this has her elbows decorated with frills, and can scarcely walk in her fashionable French boots, and unless one recognized her social position by the basket hanging on her arm, one might suppose her to be too exalted to make butter or sell eggs. The next step will be her having a foot-boy behind her to carry the load she is now so much ashamed of, so that her entire care may be given to the support of her long dress and the becoming management of her parasol.

552 — 612. The country has been contaminated by the town, and the taint, like a stain on a white garment, appears all the worse for the contrast with the purity which it mars. Town

manners prevail in districts which, though still rural in appearance, are no longer blessed with the rural simplicity of the inhabitants. In former days in the country there was no need of barring the door, for then men did not wake to rob their neighbours or guard their own property. Men slept without fear and undisturbed by the yells of drunkards, and men listened with surprise and disbelief to harrowing tales of bloody violence, which were looked on as fictions to frighten children with. But now we no longer sleep in confidence and security. Now before we sleep we must have our well-kept fire-arms ready for use, and fasten our doors. Cut-throats roam the roads, and when the cock crows in the small hours of the morning, his summons may awake us to hear the dreaded footsteps of burglars in the house. Even in the day-time we are not safe, and it is risky to traverse unfrequented spots, and woods of which formerly tuneful birds, and gentle sheep were the only occupants. There are many deep-rooted and incurable causes for this sad change. Our world is steadily and progressively deteriorating. Added power brings added wealth, wealth brings indulgence and indulgence creates intemperance. Intemperance generates the infectious and craving epidemic that fastens first upon the wealthy, then takes hold of those next them in the social scale, and so corrupts in its course every rank in life from the nobleman to the plough-boy. Those, who by their wealth and influence, or by their official authority have the power to restrain the excesses of the lower ranks, neglect their duty, and, devoted only to enjoyment, frequent London, and in this way leave a free scope for violence and lawlessness in the county districts, which they might have saved by remaining in them. Even when they do occupy country places and see the mischief which is being done, those who are authorized to prevent it are not infrequently indifferent. The well-fed, jolly parson is often a careless magistrate, and neglects in the same spirit of easy indulgence his duties both as a clergyman and a justice. Sometimes he is afraid to exercise his power, he dares not punish, and, influenced by fear of the offender's confederates, releases the scoundrel whom he does not venture to imprison.

Sometimes, though by his profession he should be spiritually holy, he may himself have his pet foible, and where money is concerned he may be less fastidious than becomes a clergyman. Look carefully at his lily hand. It is scarcely so pure that a disfiguring stain or two is not observable. Fie! fie! These stains were left by bribes. He is venal and the man who has business with him, if he wishes a favourable interview offers his present of game, fish, or other delicacy and is successful.

613—658. But this sad and pernicious condition of things may, above all, be traced to a source which regarded in itself is honourable and which all who are instigated by regard for the public weal must wish continued. 'Tis the general institution of the Militia that has destroyed the morals of the lower ranks. Somehow or other the profession of arms through the empty pride and extravagant folly of those who pursue it, seems irreconcilable with sober views and opposed to moral improvement in however good a course they may be borne. The simple and unsophisticated country-boy, harmless in intention and ignorant as a child of everything but his own, humble amusements, an occasional bout at wrestling, a foot-race or at statute fair is frightened to hear that he has been *drawn* for the Militia.

He bashfully takes off his hat and indistinctly vows on the Bible to be what they choose to make him, and to do anything they order him. After this he is at once handed over to the Sergeant who, while instructing him is plagued with his stupidity and makes a butt of him for his clumsiness. He is sworn at for his shambling walk, his toes turned in, his crooked legs, curved shoulders, and melancholy expression. Though stupid and made of intractable materials, he yet gradually becomes a new man, is aware of and proud of the change in himself. He is upright in figure, he walks properly instead of shuffling along, strides straight out, soldier-like in his manner, his appearance and his gait, has his head smeared with powder and jauntily carries his hat or feathered helmet,

and when the usual term of three years' service is over, goes unwilling back to the work he has so long deserted. He is disgusted with the absence of military music in his occupations, whistles a march as he drives his cattle, and pines for the gay companions he has lost. If the change in his appearance were all, things would not be so bad, but in discarding his awkward carriage the unfortunate fellow has also changed his simplicity and innocence. He has learnt to curse, to gamble, and to drink, and in illustration of the lessons he has acquired on service he astounds and pains his wondering friends by his profligacy, laziness, and breach of the day of rest. He seduces some miserable girl, and breaks his mother's heart, and, in short, prides himself on his success in becoming a nuisance where he was formerly a useful member of society.

659 — 690. Social man is like a flower which grows in its own natural home. In social conditions only are his powers developed and conspicuous, and used for the good of his kind. But man compulsorily banded with others, by royal order, or linked to them by interested motives or collected in tribes under one chieftain for military ends, like flowers which have been culled and fastened close together to be packed in a vase, rapidly degenerates and spoiled by contact incurs intolerable foulness. This is the reason why corporate bodies are so hurtful to the public weal, and their members, men who are possibly spotless in their individual actions, as soon as they are joined together become a detestable mass deserving only to be dis-organized, and injurious to the general welfare. For this reason, too, traders who can be accused of no offence against the virtues of private life, once they are joined in a "company," seem to change their characters, and ignoring all considerations of humanity and the natural privileges which belong alike, to all, form settlements by violence and pushing their business by forcible means, stain with blood the pure robe of blameless mercantile equity. For this reason, too, the glorious profession of arms, as people mistakenly call it, influenced by the glamour of its pageantry

with all the attendant grandeur of trumpets and guns, military music and everlasting fame, is an institution where levity is systematically instilled, where coxcombs are privileged to be fools, where bravery excuses every sin.

691—717. The country, however, though despised and neglected by the wealthy, and, still more lamentable, tainted with fashions and customs to which it was once a stranger, has still charms for me. The country has been the scene of all my yearnings, and of every soothing hope of earthly happiness that I have ever conceived. I used, in imagination, to ramble in the country in my youth before I had the option of choosing my dwelling place, or even expected to have it. Even my dreams were connected with the country, and my first youthful attempts at poetry when for amusement's sake I tried to rhyme before I had acquired the control of language and the necessary criticism of my own efforts were of a pastoral nature. No poets but those who wrote in praise of nature had any attractions for me. The descriptions of great warriors and of their deeds sickened me, but I was never tired of such pastoral verse as Virgil's when he wrote of Tityrus to listen to whom the bucolic crowd gathered beneath the spreading beech. Milton I looked on as a real poet. His 'Paradise Lost' when first I read it, excited in me an admiration that exceeded all my youthful attempts to express it. I positively leaped with delight, and wondered that at the mature age of fourteen I had only then for the first time discovered its beauties, and, my admiration growing as I read, I sorrowfully imagined that the pleasure of reading it was partially lost because I had not discovered it before.

718—730. I also read and appreciated and wished I could have been acquainted with the witty Cowley, who was so passionately attached to country life and described it so affectingly. He long and persistently 'endeavoured to secure a country life, and when he at last attained his object it was with a rapture akin to that of accepted lovers. Modern enlightenment has corrected my estimate of his writings; still, I cannot help regretting that such a brilliant intellect was

caught in the meshes of scholastic subtilty. I still honour him accomplished as he was though living in seclusion, and though taking his ease in the quiet retirement of Chertsey, by no means idle, but compensating in literary retirements for the society he had left.

731—761. The love of nature's creations is inherent in the human mind, and in the composition of man when he was first made this love was among the elements which constituted him. God has in all instances distinguished each man from every other by features and characteristics so skilfully varied that no two men were ever found absolutely alike, but this holds good in every one, that all can see and appreciate the loveliness of God's world. Those whose minds have been cultured and instructed have a more accurate perception of this loveliness, but all admire and are more or less touched by it. It is a feeling which survives even without nourishment, and the occupations of the crowded city and the indulgence of an easy life though they may crush many of man's most excellent feelings are unable to extinguish or weaken it. The gay villas with which grimy London is surrounded like a Red Man with his wampum are an indication of this feeling. How greatly is the dweller in towns cheered, and how his weakened constitution is invigorated by a draught of pure air or a peep at a green meadow. Even in the heart of the crowded town people congratulate themselves on being the happy owners of a bit of unoccupied ground, though the atmosphere chokes nearly all growth in it. Such a one is proud of a few stray shoots of sad coloured mint, night-shade or valerian which grow in the hole he calls a garden. These plants, though but wretched specimens of luxuriant nature remind him that she still exists and that green, so grateful to the eye-sight, is her favoured colour.

762—779. The lattices on which trailing plants are clustered and the windows in front of which one sees the orange plant, myrtle and the sweet smelling mignonette arranged are so many evidences of the natural and indestructible craving for country surroundings which clings to man.

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